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**INTERNATIONAL TEAM WORK:**  
**Analysis of multicultural experiences from managers and students' perspective.**

Master`s Thesis in  
Cross – Cultural Management

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

PDI	Power Distance Index
IDV	Individualism
MAS	Masculinity
UAI	Uncertainty Avoidance Index
LTO	Long Term Orientation





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**ABSTRACT:**

The theme of cross-cultural has always been the subject of study and examination by many researchers and scholars. Through this thesis, the theme of work in an international team was also added to the cross-cultural theme in order to understand the synergies that can occur between them. This dissertation aims to analyse how multicultural experiences can have an impact on people. Therefore, to the research question, have been added three objectives to make the development of the thesis more efficient.

In this case, to answer the research question, it was decided to apply a qualitative analysis, which gives the possibility to interpret the data obtained. As for the interview model, the semi-structured model was chosen. A fundamental role for the analysis of the thesis, were the models extensively studied in the chapter dedicated to the theory, such as the model of Hofstede and Trompenaars. Furthermore, the proposed model also played an interesting role as it presented a combination of different variables.

As the thesis also considered the interaction of people within a teamwork, one of the objectives of the research question was to identify the advantages and disadvantages that emerged from this cooperation.

An interesting aspect that offers this dissertation concerns the possibility of investigating the theme through two perspectives: that of managers and that of students. The choice of these two categories is due precisely because these people are often subject to interactions both in teams and against different cultures.

In the end it was concluded by stating that multicultural collaborations are a benefit for people, and this can be seen in detail in the findings.

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**KEY WORDS:** Cross-Cultural, Culture, Team working, Multicultural Team, Advantages, Disadvantages, Manager, Student.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the study

An Indian story, taken from the *Sakuntala* of Kalidasi, talks about a big elephant in front of a sage who is immersed and focused in meditation. After a while, the elephant begins to move away slowly. When the animal is gone, the sage sees the footprints left by the animal and states:

*“Here was an elephant.”* (Mantovani, 1998).

The giant elephant is invisible to the eyes of the wise because he is very concentrated in his meditation activity. Hence, the invisible animal represents the cultural dimension of our society, which is imperceptible to people's eyes because they do not know how to look at it. As soon as they know how to deal with it, from being invisible it becomes a looming mountain that covers the horizon. Therefore, globalization turns out to be an essential tool for understanding cultural diversity since it connects people, physically and virtually, from different cultures and countries. (Mantovani, 1998)

Globalization is an economic and social phenomenon that most distinguishes this historical moment. Although internationalization can be considered as a natural consequence of the growth of a company, the advent of globalization has profoundly changed its approach to the global market. Thus, many small and large businesses need to establish and manage relationships among people from different nationalities and cultures to shorten the so-called "cultural distance". (Young, Berkhout, Gallopin, Janssen, Ostrom and Van der Leeuw, 2006)

As a first step, it is relevant to figure out the impact that globalization has on the Cross-Cultural Management, since the latter has been and is the subject of study of many researchers and authors - such as Hofstede, Trompenaars, Bodley and so on - who aim to provide a solution to the problem of cultural distance. Since cross-cultural is a crucial

aspect for companies, there is a high investment on training employees on how to interact at a global level. (Lang, 2004)

A complete analysis of the cross-cultural management turns out to be proper especially because - within companies – nowadays, there is an attitude to build up teams with members from different nations, therefore, being able to manage diversity, might be a strategic challenge for most companies. (Lang, 2004)

First of all, people and companies must understand the meaning of collaborating in a team to achieve common goals, by blending different personalities and methodologies. There must be the perception of belonging to a group within the team itself, but also - from outside - it should be possible to show and spread the image of a concerted team. (Tajfel, 1981)

When there is a natural sense of belonging and interaction, then the “team working” becomes more stimulating and accepting diversity becomes a challenge from which people learn and deal with. This predisposition fosters the cooperation within an international team, where a mutual exchange of motivation, methodology and knowledge helps to overcome those difficulties that are evident at first sight, such as culture diversity. (Crispiani, 2010)

Another important aspect to consider is team building, which can be considered as an investment in terms of time and resources invested. It is essential for the good performance of the company in achieving its objectives and being successful. In fact, only through a healthy cooperation of many employees, a firm has the possibility to go far and stronger. (Fapohunda, 2013)

Nevertheless, being always immersed in an international environment might lead to different advantages and disadvantages; for example, if on one hand encountering other cultures, may help people to improve personally themselves, on the other hand, people, who are characterized by strong prejudices and stereotypes against other cultures, tend to hinder teamwork.

All in all, the purpose of this thesis is not to identify further differences that may emerge from a multicultural cooperation in an international team, but rather to analyse how all these differences have an impact on specific individual, such as managers and students, and how they react to it.

## 1.2. The broad foundation for the research problem

The multiculturalism is the subject of many studies by many authors, which were cited above - as Hofstede, Trompenaars and etc. - where the main purpose is to identify the differences among distinctive nations and cultures.

These existing studies are an essential contribution in understanding the attitude of people in performing a task or while they are dealing with other people. In this way, several approaches may be identified according to the origin of the person in question. (Primecz, Romani and Sackmann, 2009)

Moreover, concepts of “team building” and “international team” are analysed in depth to understand all the advantages and disadvantages that determine their level of cooperation and the impact on the members of the team. (Egolf and Sondra, 2013).

Working in a team is always challenging. The dynamics within a teamwork, if not properly managed, can lead to disaggregation and internal competition. Moreover, it is said, as in sports, the team is the reason and pillar of success. Today, this concept is increasingly present also in working life in order to achieve certain objectives. In fact, the notion of “team working” belongs to the man, who through his education lifetime, from kindergarten to university, was educated to collaborate, share, accept and understand what is different from himself. (Kirby, 2011)

In addition, H. E. Luccock (2011) in his researches explains and proves that the concept of working in a team is exalted and considered crucial. This concept, according to the author, emphasises that, despite the potential that a person may have, certain objectives can only be achieved through the participation of each member, since a solid group brings to success, as it can be seen through the following quote.

*“No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it.”*  
(Kirby, 2011)

Nowadays, knowing how to work in a team is one of the most sought-after skills by companies, when hiring graduated students. In fact, today, teams are increasingly supported because, if well managed and organized, they are able to adapt promptly to the demands of companies and organizations. (BIHECC, 2007)

Therefore, the principal focus is merely on the entity of the group and its performance as a single body and less as an individual member of it.

Indeed, it is interesting to figure out the effects that the interaction among people - characterized by a different backgrounds, culture or mindset - has on the individual components, and how each of them adapts to these dynamic circumstances.

It is impressive to find out which features – that are not familiar with the own culture - are easier to first assimilate and consequently adapt to, and which ones are more difficult to accept.

Precisely for these reasons, the study of this thesis starts from the existing literature and studies carried out in a more general way on the theme of culture and teamwork. Subsequently, there will be a zoom on the effects that the individual contribution has within an international team and its members. In this way, it will be possible to gather all the information regarding both advantages and disadvantages which will be analysed in detail in the theoretical chapter.

### 1.3. Research gap

The topics that this dissertation covers are studied separately. In fact, it is important to examine the cross-cultural phenomena but is also relevant to understand the notion of teamwork, by taking into consideration its benefits and drawbacks. Following this path, it will be possible to see the impact that cross-culture has on the individuals - specifically managers and students - and on the team.

The theory behind the cross-culture is based on the previous examinations done by experts in socio-psychological and managerial fields like Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, since they were focused in identifying detail traits of cultural diversity.

Different dimensions have been identified which aim to better understand the relationships that can arise when there is a clash of different cultures. For instance, through the dimension “Uncertainty Avoidance Index” (UAI), it has been stated that some countries are more risk taken than others and this might have an impact on how people react to uncertainty as well. (Hofstede, 1980)

Furthermore, other dimensions have been analysed, such as (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede, 1980):

- Masculinity index, which identifies also if some countries are keener in living for working rather than working for living;
- Power Distance index, which talks about how the distribution of power is perceived within a country.
- Neutral vs Affective, which refers to the emotional orientation of people, if they are keener to show their feelings or not.
- Sequential time vs Synchronous time which means if people are more willing to do more things at the same time, or they prefer to do one activity at a time.

The dimensions listed so far are just some of those that both authors have identified to better understand the perception of these issues by different cultures and nations.

Consequently, bringing together people from different backgrounds can lead to situations that are more or less difficult to manage.

On the other hand, the “international team” and “working in a team” notions are also developed, by identifying how the multicultural team is developed, recognising the benefits that this cooperation brings to all its members and analysing the obstacles that may rise. In fact, several exponents from different countries studied this concept extensively, such as:



- the British Tajfel (1974), who claimed that the sense of belonging to a group must not only be perceived within the group itself, but also recognizes from the outside;
- the Turkish Sherif (1988), who said that the group is a structure, where all members are connected to each other through role relationships;
- the German Lewin (1948), who discovered that a peculiar characteristic of the group is the level of interdependence of its members.

Therefore, the topic of multiculturalism has always been a subject of study and interest from multiple points of view. The effects that come from the identification of the advantages and disadvantages of multi-cultural collaborations, have been studied on a large scale.

In fact, benefits that have been analysed are: being open-minded; flexibility or adaptation; improving a foreign language such as English; exchanging of know-how and knowledge and other more which enables people's enrichment from both professional and personal sides. (Cox, T.H and Blake, S. 1991; Peter, 2017; Stahl et al. 2006)

On the other hand, also many drawbacks have been identified, which some of them are listed below, such as problems that may occur due to:

- different way of working and organizing activities (Heggertveit-Aoudia, S. 2012)
- different perceptions of time (Arman, G and Adair, C.K., 2012)
- different beliefs and values (Schreiber, 1996)
- different way of communication which might be very to interpret by another culture. (Harris, Moran and Moran, 2004)

What is not analysed deeply and, therefore, encourages a further interest in me, is to understand how these multicultural experiences - which inevitably might produce pros and cons - have an impact on specific people, such as managers and students. Moreover, this study will also consider variables - such as having previous multicultural experiences, being influenced by prejudices, and many others - that will be conjugated together in the

“Model Elaborated” paragraph, which will be developed in the “Theoretical Background” chapter.

As mentioned before, the analysis aims to take into consideration managers, who work for international companies, and students, who have studied abroad for a significant amount of time: at least 6 months.

The first category is important because it covers a role that very often allows it to be in contact with a lot of people from different countries, precisely the greater the duties, the more likely they might deal with foreign people.

The second category is represented by the students. Their experience turns out to be important because, as said previously, “working in a group” is something with which people are used to deal with during their lives. However, in the university the awareness of collaborating within an international team might take on a more noteworthy value. Furthermore, nowadays universities are linked to each other even more, hence, it gives the possibility to students to carry out an internship abroad or to study in a foreign university. (Top Universities, 2012)

Hence, it is fascinating to examine how this collaboration has an impact on these people, both at personal and professional level, and whether their multicultural experiences turned out to be more profitable or harmful.

Since this aspect is not analysed in depth and furthermore it is a topic that I feel close to me, as I was born in Albania, grew up in Italy and lived in Finland recently for one year, I strongly believe in the objective of the study and in the magnitude of its impact.

#### 1.4. Research question and its objectives

This thesis aims to analyse the interaction and cooperation in an international team by two different perspectives: the point of view of managers and students.

Specifically, it deals with multicultural teams as culture plays a crucial role in the development of the analysis.

The study will consider students and managers, since they are two different social groups but equally contaminated by cross-cultural cooperation.

Therefore, the research question to be answered is:

*“What impact does the multicultural experience have on managers and students through collaboration in an international team?”*

As for the objectives, they are defined as it follows:

- To understand if an international collaboration brings more benefits than the one between members of the same culture.
- To investigate whether there are any features that people find more difficult/easier to adapt to other culture.
- Check if there are any factors - such as having previous experiences in a multicultural team or not - that change the perception of respondents regarding the benefits and disadvantages of international collaboration.

### 1.5. Delimitations

To provide an answer to the research question, the analysis of the thesis will be based mainly on the theory, since it is fundamental to understand in depth the concepts of cross-cultural and international team working. Then, through the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, it will be provided a qualitative response.

The theoretical framework of the master's thesis will be subdivided mainly into two macro-areas. The first part will focus more on "Cross-Cultural Management", where the cross-cultural contexts will be analysed in detail, by considering also the influence of the culture of one country. The in-depth study of national culture turns out to be crucial since it is going to analyse further distinctions, based on theories elaborated by the major authors such as Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner.

The second part of the theory will focus on International team working. In this context, it will be analysed in detail the concept of team, team-building and working in an international team. The research will point out what advantages and disadvantages may derive from such cooperation and interaction.

The study will be analysed from two perspectives, the managers and students' point of view. The aim of the thesis is to grasp, through theory and analysis, how is established a cooperation within an international team and which impact it has on both professional and personal life background.

## 1.6. Structure

The structure of the master thesis will be defined as follows:

- in the first chapter the introductory part will be presented, in which will be explained, the background of the study and the research question with its theoretical and empirical objectives.
- The second chapter will present the theoretical framework which in turn will be divided into three parts: cross-cultural management, International team working, and the last part will focus into the explanation of the model elaborated.
- The third chapter will be dedicated to the methodology, where the research approach, the type of research and the credibility of the data will be exposed.
- The fourth chapter will be devoted entirely to the analysis, where the data obtained will be processed and divided in two perspectives: the one of managers and the one of students
- The fifth chapter will present the concluding part, providing conclusions of this thesis and suggestions for further studies and how to improve research in the future.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

#### 2.1.1. The impact of Globalization in Cross-Cultural Management

Today, the global market is characterized by a strong integration that allows all countries of the world having interdependence among the diversities of national economies. The efficiency of transport and communication networks makes all movements of people, goods and capital faster and safer. Everything is possible thanks to the advent of globalization that has changed the society and has tightly connected countries.

It was in April 1959 when, for the first time, the word “globalization” was mentioned by The Economist magazine. However, this term was globally used after twenty years by some Japanese business economists. Finally, it reached the maximum notoriety in the Nineties, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Tassinari, 2015).

The American political commentator and author, T.L. Friedman (1999), gave the following definition of what globalization is:

*“[T]he inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before - in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is also producing a powerful backlash from those brutalized or left behind by this new system... Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world.”* (Friedman, 1999)

Without any doubt, globalization brought many advantages and benefits for companies, but at the same time, because of it, new problems arose. Today, the splitting and subdivision of the various phases that make up the value chain - developed by Porter - are increasingly common even for small businesses. (Porter, 1985)

As a consequence of this, companies choose to localate their activities in countries where they can have a greater benefit in terms of costs and returns. However, in the meanwhile, this process, triggers strong competition between countries which are changing policies to attract more foreign investments, and therefore, are leading to regulatory dumping. Moreover, thanks to globalization, companies are able to place their products in more attractive markets, increasing sales and facing a more aggressive competition. (Perulli, Adalberto; Brino, Vania, 2018)

Globalization has also a significant impact on the labour market, which no longer takes place solely on a national scale, but also on a global level. In fact, this can be seen by observing the management of large international companies that is made up of employees and managers of different nationalities. Therefore, a fundamental aspect for companies is adaptation, which means, availability of employees in being ready to work in different contexts at different time periods. This is a proof of high degree of flexibility and an open mindedness towards new realities. (Paine and Koske, 2017).

These traits, as a result, enhance the perception of employees, who are subsequently able to understand and satisfy the needs of customers from different cultures. Besides, having a smoother integration with colleagues, has a significant impact on their cooperation which is more efficient and productive for both the company and employees. (Paine and Koske, 2017).

For all considerations made so far, it is possible to believe that today both managers and businesses need to overcome the challenge related to the cross-cultural phenomena to ensure the success of the activity of their company. Indeed, the comprehension and study of Cross-Cultural Management is an essential first step towards successfully managing diversity within a company. (Soderberg and Holden, 2002)

### 2.1.2. Definition of Cross-Culture

Nowadays, the clash of different cultures is inevitable because, in this world, people are witnessing a situation where there is continuous cooperation between companies belonging to different nations, and flow of both capital and people. (Hallet, 2016; Ortiz-Ospina, Beltekian and Roser, 2018)

Although it is natural to study cross-cultural management for the reasons mentioned so far, only after the 1970s this topic was developed and analysed from an economic and managerial point of view, not just considering the sociological and anthropological point of view. Nevertheless, the material available regarding cross-cultural management remains limited, because - in the past - cultural diversity was not perceived as important as it is today by companies. (Romani, Barmeyer, Primeez and Pilhofer, 2018)

On the contrary, now, there is more awareness regarding the influence of cultural diversity on international negotiations. Therefore, the first step towards managing a successful business, is to comprehend the concept of cultural diversity, since it has an impact in all companies: from large firms - that operate at global level - to small local activities. Today, more and more often, there is a clash between cultures, hence cross-cultural management aims to analyse the behaviour of every individual who has different background within an organization. By comparing and understanding cultural diversity, it is possible to handle and improve the relationship between employees and the company. (Chua, 2012)

A comprehensive definition of the topic in question was provided by Nancy Adler (2008), a professor of management at McGill University, who said:

*“Cross-cultural management explains the behaviour of people in organizations around the world and shows people how to work in organizations with employees and client populations from many different cultures.”* (Adler, 2008)

All companies, that want to expand internationally through internationalization processes, have in their interest to show themselves inclined to adopt a "Cross-Cultural" perspective;



this means being able to deal with diversity in a mature, intelligent and flexible way. (Adler, 2008)

Intercultural contacts are very often a cause of conflict due to misunderstandings because each culture has its history that distinguishes it from the others.

Communication, language, values, religion, beliefs are considered distinctive signs of each nation and, therefore, are dealt appropriately, in regard to the traditions that characterize the country in question. (Chua, 2012)

A striking example is a substantial difference that distinguishes Western society from Eastern society. If the oriental culture is characterized by a hierarchical organization, the same cannot be said for the western ones where the flattest organizations prevail.

A good mediation turns out to be communication, which aims to make use of those cultural models that are accepted or rejected by both cultures in question. In this way, the contrasts that could arise can be avoided or overcome, since an intercultural dialogue accepted by all members has been used. (Wang, 2007)

This attitude not only avoids conflicts, but also helps to stimulate openness. Being open-minded might make people more curious and above all more respectful of what is perceived as different. Therefore, it is essential to accept and welcome what is diverse, and this may only be possible with a positive, tolerant and constructive attitude.

### 2.1.3. Definition of Culture

Many disciplines such as social sciences, anthropology, philosophy and even economic disciplines - especially managerial ones - have studied and addressed the topic of culture. To date, many scholars and authors have provided different interpretations, but there is still no definition that can be considered universal. (Landis, 1972)

The term "culture" owes its origin to the Latin past participle "colere" which indicated agriculture, cultivation of the land and cattle breeding. Over the years this term has

assumed figurative meanings such as the inner cultivation of the person. (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019)

As mentioned above, there are divergent opinions about culture as some authors argue that sharing culture is a source of enrichment. In fact, it fosters openness and produce strong bonds between people and companies. Other authors, however, perceive cultural differences as a source of numerous conflicts, or as if sharing culture leads to the loss of the collective identity. (UNESDOC, 2009; Dekker, Rutte and Van den Berg, 2008)

In 1871, the British anthropologist, E. B. Tylor, was one of the first intellectuals who defined culture. He argued that culture is a continuous and complex interaction between people with the tendency to form routines over years, inclined to go towards homogenization, as can be deduced from the following definition:

*“Culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.” (Tylor, E. B., 1871)*

In 1998 D. Genelot took up the thesis put forward by E. B. Tylor, stating that the man is affected by the context in which he is raised and educated; therefore, each person is the result of his own culture.

*“men are products of their culture: their representations, their visions of what is good and what is wrong, their behaviour at work, their concepts of organizations are the fruit of the representations carried by their ancestors” (Genelot D. 1998)*

Finally, in 1994, John H. Bodley gives an exhaustive definition of what culture is, identifying different categories addressed to the definition of culture, as it is shown in the table T.1 below.

<b>Topical</b>	“Culture consists of everything on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organization, religion, or economy”
<b>Historical</b>	“Culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed onto future generations”
<b>Behavioural</b>	“Culture is shared, learned human behaviour, a way of life”
<b>Normative</b>	“Culture is ideals, values, or rules for living”
<b>Functional</b>	“Culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together”
<b>Mental</b>	“Culture is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals”
<b>Structural</b>	“Culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviours”
<b>Symbolic</b>	“Culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society”

Table 1: Definitions of Culture (Bodley, 1994)

To understand a culture, it is relevant to have the predisposition to go deep and not dwell on what is perceptible to the human eye, but to carry out a more detailed study in order to observe and analyse all its levels. (Bodley, 1994)

In this regard, Edward T. Hall, in 1976 developed an analogy between culture and the Iceberg shape. Imagining that society and the environment were represented by the iceberg, he claimed that some aspects immediately jumped to the eye for people, while others were more hidden and deeper to understand as they were below the surface. The iceberg is represented as follows:

- *Behaviour / Practices*: represent the tip of the iceberg. These characteristics are easily perceived as they are immediately evident and there is no need to provide an explanation to understand them. Some examples of easily perceived behaviours are: how to dress, how to eat, how to communicate etc.

- *Unspoken rules* are the first category that characterizes the so-called implicit culture. At this stage of the iceberg, which is no longer visible as it is under water, people find all the assumptions, the interpretations influenced by our culture. Practical examples of this category are the concept of time and knowledge, the expression of emotions and so on.
- *Unconscious Rules* represent the second category of implicit culture. They are in the deepest area of the iceberg which is extremely difficult to understand since they are the core values that are influenced by culture. The issues that are addressed are the identification of what is good and what is bad; what can be considered acceptable and what cannot; the concept of oneself versus others. As it can be perceived, they are more complex and profound issues to deal with.

The purpose of this model is to show teach that people cannot express an opinion or judge a culture based solely on what they see or hear. It is essential to take all the time necessary to interact with new cultures, to dig deeper and discover those rules that are not immediately caught at first sight. Hence, people could easily commune with the profound values and beliefs of society to better comprehend its culture. (Hall, 1976)

To better understand the theme of cross-cultural management, it is important to widen and deepen the concept of culture at a national level.

#### 2.1.4. National Culture

Over time, multiculturalism prevailed, thus recently many researchers tried to grasp the similarities and diversities that characterize different cultures all over the world. In fact, within a nation, it might be very common to find people from other countries, linguistic minorities and different religious groups. Therefore, it is natural to ask if there is the possibility of healthy coexistence between different cultures or if this is a reason for conflict.

It is rather difficult to understand all the features that characterize the culture of a state, because very often these peculiarities are very subtle and difficult to observe, even if thanks to these characteristics one country stands out from another, being unique.

Tayeb (2003) identifies several elements that helps to better understand the culture of one nation, such as the following institutional elements:

- *Family*: in this context there is the passing on to every individual, starting from childhood, of all customs and habits.
- *Religion*: over the years, it has a crucial impact on shaping the thoughts of a community; thus, influencing people perception and vision of the world.
- *Education*: the educational system also influences the personality of people both from a personal and professional point of view, determining their qualities as future employees.
- *Means of communication*: they play a fundamental role as they bring people together, using a common language. In this way, the geographical position is no longer a problem to transmit and deliver any information.
- *Multinationals*: being present in several countries, they influence the tastes of consumers with their products or services. Moreover, multinational companies also have an impact on the working conditions of a country.

Besides Tayeb, there have been many authors who have ventured into the comprehension and analysis of national culture. In fact, other authors - who studied the culture differences among nations - will be analysed in the following paragraphs.

#### 2.1.4.1. Hofstede model

G. Hofstede, a Dutch professor, psychologist and anthropologist, is one of the leading exponents of intercultural research worldwide. His world-renowned work, *Software of mind*, aims to expose and analyse how culture affects the interactions between countries.

Between 1967 and 1973, while Hofstede was hired as a psychologist at the IBM company, he submitted to 116,000 employees - from 68 different countries - a survey.

Through the investigation, he identified the following five dimensions that are crucial for distinguishing national cultures (Hofstede, 1980):

##### 1. Power Distance Index (PDI);

The PDI is an indicator of the relationship within the society of a country. The distance of power refers to its degree of distribution within the society in which people live.

In societies where a great distance of power prevails among those who are higher up in society and those subordinated to it, the latter tend to have a much more respectful and formal attitude; moreover, very often it also manifests attitudes of fear towards superiors and bosses. As a result, bosses tend to take an authoritarian attitude towards those who are below them. On the contrary, in cultures where a low distance of power prevails, there are less rigid and formal relationships among colleagues. (Hofstede, 1980)

The table below shows all the characteristics that belong to societies with a low and high PDI; it also shows which countries are members of one of the two categories.

	Low power distance	High power distance
Characteristic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy for convenience</li> <li>• Inequality in society should be minimized</li> <li>• People of various power levels feel less threatened and more prepared to trust people</li> <li>• Superiors are people like me</li> <li>• Low dependence needs</li> <li>• Less centralisation</li> <li>• Flatter organizations, fewer supervisors</li> <li>• Change by evolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy needed</li> <li>• Inequality accepted</li> <li>• Privileged power holders</li> <li>• Cooperation among the powerless is difficult to bring about because of low faith in people</li> <li>• Subordinates consider superiors to be of a different kind</li> <li>• High dependence needs</li> <li>• Greater centralization</li> <li>• Taller organization pyramids</li> <li>• Change by revolution</li> </ul>
Example of countries	Austria, Denmark, Israel, Finland, New Zealand	Guatemala, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Philippines

Table 2: Power Distance Index (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

## 2. Individualism (IDV);

In this context, the relationship among the individual and the group is analysed in order to evaluate which cultures are more individually-oriented and which instead favour the collectivism approach. Hofstede observes that individualistic societies focus on the person as a single entity. For this reason, companies present weak relationships and frequent clashes. (Hofstede 1980)

On the contrary, collectivist societies are characterized by strong interpersonal bonds, where important values such as trust and loyalty are considered essential and vital. (Hofstede 1980)

The table below shows all the characteristics that belong to individualistic and collectivist societies; it also shows which countries are members of one of the two categories.

	<b>Low individualism (Collectivism)</b>	<b>High individualism (Individualism)</b>
Characteristic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We”-conscious, identity is based on the social system</li> <li>• Opinions pre-determined by group (e.g. family)</li> <li>• Fulfill obligations to group</li> <li>• Relationships over tasks</li> <li>• Important with harmony among group members</li> <li>• Private and work life combined</li> <li>• Promotion based on loyalty and seniority</li> <li>• Loss of face and shame</li> <li>• Particularism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I”-conscious, identity is based on the individual</li> <li>• Private opinions</li> <li>• Fulfill obligations to self</li> <li>• Tasks over relationships</li> <li>• Important with autonomy and variety</li> <li>• Private and work life separated</li> <li>• Promotion based on results</li> <li>• Loss of self-respect and guilt</li> <li>• Universalism</li> </ul>
Example of countries	Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Pakistan, Venezuela,	Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Netherlands, USA

Table 3: Individualism Index (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

### 3. Masculinity (MAS);

The MAS indicator identifies the countries in which feminine or masculine values prevail. In countries considered as feminine societies, values such as mutual respect, loyalty and collaboration stand out because people tend to establish good relations within society. On the other hand, in societies considered to be masculine, emerge competition, personal power and fulfilment. (Hofstede, 1980)

The table below shows all the characteristics that belong to femininity societies and masculinity societies; it also shows which countries are members of one of the two categories.



	<b>Low Masculinity (Femininity)</b>	<b>High Masculinity (Masculinity)</b>
Characteristic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of life, serving others</li> <li>• Striving for consensus</li> <li>• Trying to be better than others is neither socially nor materially rewarded</li> <li>• Intuition</li> <li>• Work in order to live</li> <li>• Sympathy for unfortunate</li> <li>• Overlapping roles, men/ women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambitious, need to excel</li> <li>• Tendency to polarize</li> <li>• There are rewards (e.g. wealth and status) for the successful</li> <li>• Decisiveness</li> <li>• Live in order to work</li> <li>• Admiration for the achiever</li> <li>• Separate roles, men/ women</li> </ul>
Example of countries	Costa Rica, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden	Austria, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, Venezuela

Table 4: Masculinity Index (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

#### 4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI);

The UAI index measures the rejection of uncertainty, i.e. situations that destabilize because they are unknown, different from the usual and surprising. Therefore, all countries that seek to minimize risk by establishing laws and rules are nations that have a high degree of uncertainty. In contrast, cultures that are more likely to accept uncertainty tend to be more tolerant and contemplative and their rules are less rigid. (Hofstede 1980)

From a managerial point of view, the organizations that refuse uncertainty, prefer more the safety of the working environment. The most tolerant organizations tend to be more open to innovation and therefore more risk-prone. (Hofstede 1980)

The table below shows all the characteristics that belong to Low UA societies and High UA societies; it also shows which countries are members of one of the two categories.

	<b>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	<b>High Uncertainty Avoidance</b>
<b>Characteristic features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility, more willing to take conscious risks</li> <li>• Conflicts accepted, more tolerance</li> <li>• Less laws and rules, if rules cannot be kept they should be changed</li> <li>• Strong belief in generalists and common sense</li> <li>• Managers more interpersonally oriented</li> <li>• Relaxed, lower stress</li> <li>• Emotions not shown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to avoid failure</li> <li>• Need for agreement, intolerance of diverting opinions</li> <li>• More laws and rules, if rules cannot be kept we do wrong</li> <li>• Strong belief in experts and knowledge</li> <li>• Managers more task-oriented</li> <li>• Anxiety, high stress</li> <li>• Showing emotions accepted</li> </ul>
<b>Example of countries</b>	Denmark, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Singapore, Sweden	Belgium, Greece, Guatemala, Portugal, Uruguay

Table 5: Uncertainty Avoidance Index (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

##### 5. Long Term Orientation (LTO).

The LTO index was added after the previous four, thanks to a study - started by Michael Harris Bond - and carried out in 1985 on students from 23 countries. At that time, Bond - as a psychology professor at the University of Hong Kong - noted that the four previous dimensions did not adequately reflect the Asian reality. The mindset of societies was also influenced by temporal orientation. In fact, there are societies that give more importance to the past, while others to the present or to the future. Cultures that are more attached to traditions and the present, are considered cultures with a short-term orientation. These cultures are usually against radical traditional changes. On the contrary, cultures that, instead, have a long-term orientation, are very dynamic societies and above all concentrated on the future. (Hofstede and Bond 1988)

The table below shows all the characteristics that belong to Low LTO societies and High LTO societies; it also shows which countries are members of one of the two categories.

	<b>Low Long Term Orientation</b>	<b>High Long Term Orientation</b>
Characteristic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absolute truth</li> <li>• Normative/conventional</li> <li>• Short term view</li> <li>• Quick results expected</li> <li>• Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many truths</li> <li>• Pragmatic</li> <li>• Long-term orientation</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• How?/What?</li> </ul>
Example of countries	Czech republic, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, West Africa	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam

Table 6: Long Term Orientation (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

Hofstede (1980) stated that there does not exist a best way to manage a company characterized by multicultural people, as there are different ways to approach a company. These methods are strongly influenced by the culture of both the company and nation. The studies carried out by the author from the Netherlands were a starting point for the analysis of cross-cultural management, even if the criticisms were not lacking.

- The first criticism is due to the fact that only the employees of a single sector, namely the IT sector, were taken into consideration.
- Another criticism comes from the fact that the study was done from a Western point of view, in fact Hofstede and his collaborators had European and American origins.
- The third criticism is due to the fact that Hofstede has associated with each nation a type of culture, while very often there are nations that are characterized by multiple cultures. (Hanna, 2005).

#### 2.1.4.2. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model

Authors Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner argue that cultural diversities of nations have a very strong impact both in people lifestyle and in the managerial practices present in that nation. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997)

The differences that are analysed are difficult to measure and to value objectively because they are not immediately intuitive. Therefore, authors affirm that a culture can be distinguished from the others by considering its way of dealing with problems and finding solutions. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

To overcome this issue, authors define culture in the following way:

*“the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas”*  
(Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997)

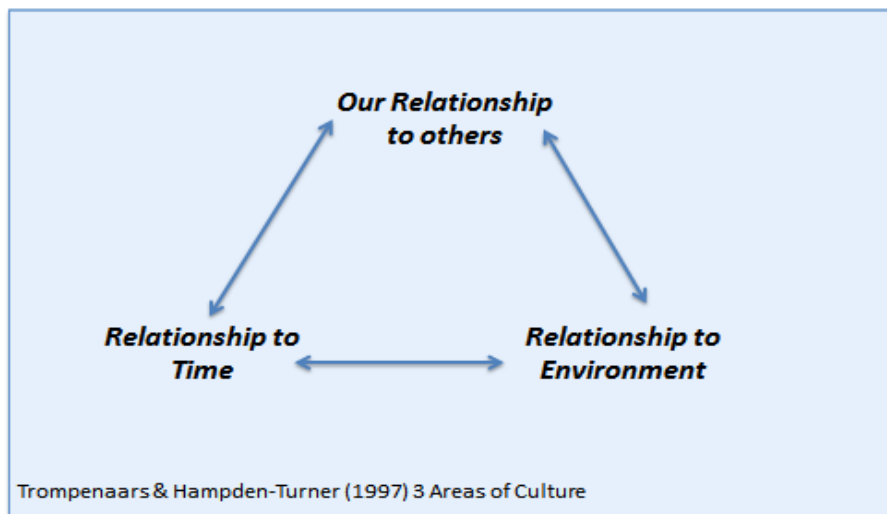


Figure 1: Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) Three Areas of Culture.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner focused on three areas of problems: problems related to the passage of time, problems due to the relationship with the environment and problems due to relationships with other people (figure 1).



Figure 2: The 7 culture dimensions. (Dudovskiy, 2013)

Through the study carried out, the following cultural dimensions were identified (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997):

- *Universalism vs Particularism*: the first dimension identifies societies: if they give more importance to rules and laws or if personal relationships are more important to them. When rules and laws are the basis for the good performance of society, it is called a universalistic system. In this case, the rules are applied in any context and must be respected by all. In addition, written agreements and contracts are the basis for business negotiations. As for particularistic cultures, they focus on human relationships, in fact many business agreements can be based on a solid friendship and / or mutual loyalty.
- *Individualism vs Communitarianism*: this dimension, also found in Hofstede, identifies whether the society is more focused on collective interest or if the attention falls on the individual one.

- *Achievement vs Ascription*: Also, this dimension takes up the concept of power distance elaborated by Hofstede. In this case, in achievement-oriented societies, job-positions are the results of the objectives achieved and the knowledge acquired. The opposite, in ascription-oriented societies, job positions are determined based on non-merit factors.
- *Neutral vs Affective*: This dimension indicates the emotional orientation of people. Those who belong to the first category, i.e. the so-called neutral cultures, do not show their feelings and emotions. People belonging to the other category, that is affective, are inclined to show their thoughts and emotions very expressively.
- *Specific vs Diffuse*: In this dimension, societies are distinguished in two types: in the first one people tend to keep personal life separated from professional life and this is typical of specific-oriented societies. The second type of societies, the so-called diffuse-oriented, people integrate their private life with their professional life.
- *Internal Direction vs External Direction*: through this dimension societies can be identified based on how the environment is controlled by people. Cultures that are more prone to internal control, argue that the environment can be controlled by people who have appropriate experience, regardless of its complexity. Cultures with external control, try to adapt to the environment and to live in harmony with external circumstances without necessarily having control over them.
- *Sequential time vs Synchronous time*: Cultures are discerned based on their predisposition to do more things at the same time. The sequential time societies prefer to do one activity at a time, while the synchronous ones manage multiple activities at the same time.

## 2.2. INTERNATIONAL TEAM WORK

### 2.2.1. Definition of a Team

Giving a complete definition to the term “Group” or “Team” is very difficult, as it has thousands of faces. There are several authors who addressed this issue, such as the German-American psychologist K.Z. Lewin (1948), who defines group as a different system with respect to the individuals that compose it. In fact, he claims that a peculiar characteristic of the group is the level of interdependence of its members, which depends on many factors such as: the breadth of the group, its organization and the cohesion within group.

Another psychologist of Turkish origin, M. Sherif, (1988) who is also considered one of the founders of social psychology, provides a further group definition.

The group is a structure, where all members are connected to each other through role relationships. Furthermore, values and norms are defined within the group and, through the interaction of the members, common interests and problems may surge. Once the structure has been implemented, there is a distribution of roles in order to define and differentiate the power of the people who are part of it.

The British psychologist, H. Tajfel (1974), associates the concept of social identity to the term team, as it is the awareness of each individual belonging to a group that distinguishes and defines the concept of group itself. This explanation of group or team, conceived as a sense of belonging, is characterized by three elements connected to each other.

- The first one, as previously mentioned, is the awareness of the individual belonging to a group;
- The second one is the evaluation - by every single member - that is given to the team, which can be positive or negative;
- The third one concerns the manifestation of feelings as for example, love, hate, joy, sadness, which are a consequence of the first two characteristics.

Moreover, Tajfel (1974) claims that the sense of belonging to a group must not only be perceived within the group itself, but also recognized from the outside. Its structure and its relation must be perceived also from an individual who is external to it.

All these "team" definitions given so far are important for creating a wide concept of what a "team" is, without associating it with any type of relationship or collaboration. Then, the concept of "team working" will be developed, as it is a typical practice adopted by companies, schools and universities.

### 2.2.2. The importance of Team Working

For the purposes of this research is also essential to analyse and study the term "working team". The substantial feature that distinguishes this concept from the simple concept of team in general, is the presence of a specific goal for producing something that must be achieved by working together.

The distinctive element of a generic group turns out to be the interaction, that is, the feeling to belong to a team. While, in team working the distinctive element is integration: all the members actively participate to create a single entity managed by a great force. (Gabassi, 2007)

Starting from the interaction to reach the integration step, there are several intermediate phases, but the most important is represented by interdependence. This phase is fundamental because it represents the awareness of individuals to depend on each other, which is the basis for founding a unity that is grounded on diversity.

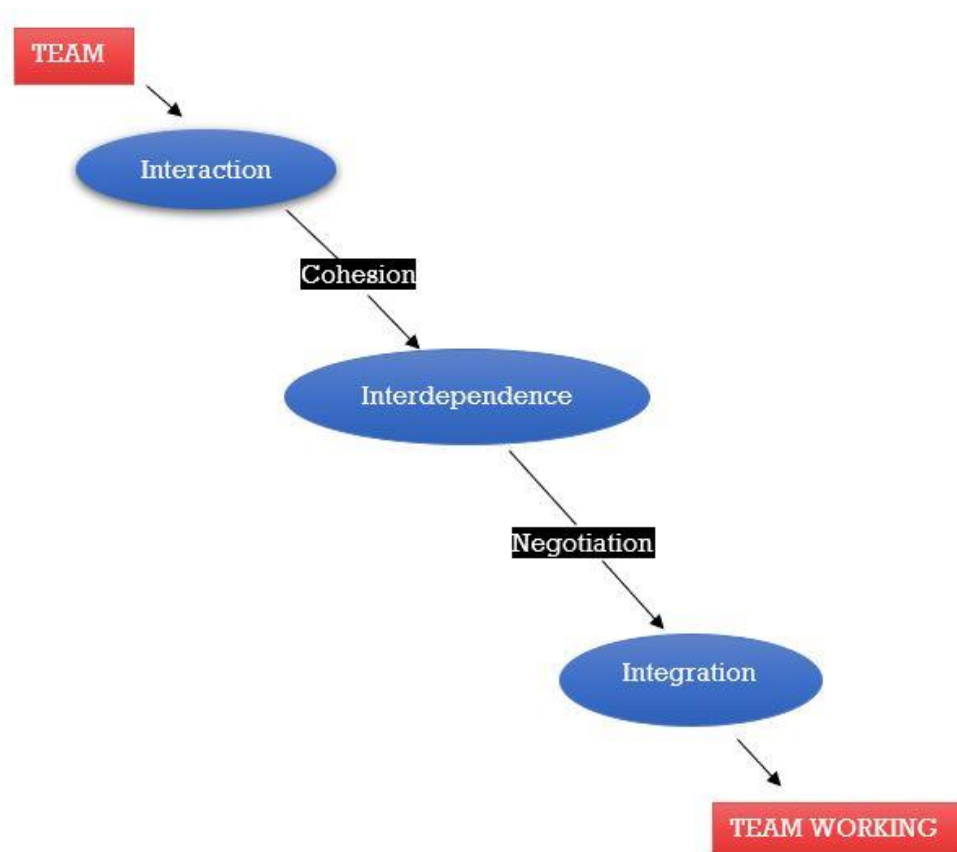
Analysing each stage, the first that is immediately after the interaction is the "Cohesion". The efficiency of developing a good cohesion lies in bringing out the equality that exists in the group, thus allowing members to consider the group as their own and to identify with it. This passage allows the formation of bonds between individuals who can be subsequently fed by positive emotions - such as esteem, respect, solidarity - or negative feelings - such as jealousy, envy, hostility - (Crispiani, 2010).



What binds interdependence and integration is negotiation. This passage is crucial because, once the personal point of view is identified and compared to that of others, thanks to the negotiation it is possible to combine different perspectives. In this way, starting from the single one, people get a common outlook that allows them to achieve all objectives set. Therefore, cohesion focuses on uniformity, while negotiation analyses the differences in order to find subsequently a common agreement. As a result of the negotiation two elements are obtained that are the essential premise of the Team Working, namely: sharing and collaboration. (Crispiani, 2010).

The figure below shows all the phases of the process that lead to “team working” starting from “team”.

Figure 3: The process from Team to Team Working (Crispiani, 2010).



Today the concept of teamwork, in small and big companies, is increasingly frequent and essential, because in a very complex context characterized by increasingly advanced technology and an improvement in science, it is more difficult for a single employee to manage projects rather than for a team to do so. (Pojaghi, 2000; Crispiani, 2010).

As mentioned at the beginning, globalization allows companies to enter the market in several ways, but the adversity is knowing how to maintain the competitive advantages against the other companies that operates in the same market. Today, many firms, know that in order to ensure the proper position on the market means being innovative, focusing on quality and avoiding delay for the launch of new products and/or services. Therefore, the idea of teamwork becomes the solution for combining all these aspects. Linking different skills, experiences and know-how, lead to the development of original ideas, more efficiency and the progress of the company, converging all key factors into business success. (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003)

There are several elements that make up a working group, such as (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Pojaghi, 2000):

- *Size*: this feature may vary depending on the purpose to achieve and the type of work to perform. Generally, a small team is preferable because it is easier to manage and more flexible. However, there are many cases in which large teams are splatted into sub-teams, in order to keep the desired level of efficiency and speed.
- *Composition*: this feature depends on the level of homogeneity/ heterogeneity present within the team: on one hand, there are homogeneous groups formed with people who have similar experiences and know-how, while, heterogenous groups have substantial cultural gap among members: intended as a difference in ability or difference according to their experiences.
- *Common goal*: this feature is very delicate because it must be stimulating and inspiring to motivate even more teamwork, but at the same time it must not be too

challenging or difficult to achieve as it could demotivate employees making them less satisfied and eager to work hard.

- *Cohesion*: through mutual support, a single entity called “team” can be formed, where common objectives are pursued. By operating in this environment, a strong sense of belonging is created which is an essential trigger to allow everyone to give the best of themselves.
- *Identity*: each team is characterized by as many identities as the number of its members, so its own personal identity turns out to be the combination of all the individual identities. This feature is a distinctive sign of each team; it is not only linked to the rules that established, to the objectives set, to the role of people, but also to the interweaving of relationships that are created within the team.
- *Engagement*: this aspect is vital for the success of the team in order to involve the employees throughout the planning stages and to achieve the goal, so as to further emphasize the group spirit.
- *Roles*: since each member has different abilities, it is important to define the roles in a clear way that allows everyone to use their potential, thus strengthening the team towards success.
- *Workplace*: the context in which the team operates may have percussion on its success or not. Therefore, preparing the right environmental conditions is a fact that should not be underestimated. A serene and engaging environment allows the team to operate productively and optimally.
- *Leadership*: like any football team that owns a captain, corporate teams also need a figure to guide them. The leader, therefore, is not an authoritative or dominating person, but a stimulating and a point of reference for the whole team.

Therefore, each team will have a specific goal to achieve - such as developing a product, designing a marketing campaign, managing the financial budget and so on. This is possible thanks to the union of all the skills and abilities that are hallmarks for each member of the team itself.

#### 2.2.2.1. Team Building

In 1965 the professor of psychology at Ohio State University, B. Tuckman, analysed and thoroughly studied all the dynamics that led to the formation of a team, identifying the following four phases. (Egolf and Sondra, 2013).

- *Forming*: this phase occurs when the group is actually created or, in case of an existing group, when significant changes of role take place. In this first stage, the members get together, they want to win acceptance by the other members of the group and look for the guide figure in the leader. The main objective at this stage is to establish the purpose of the work and to make clear the expectations of working together.
- *Storming*: in the second phase the employees have the opportunity to get to know each other better through the exchange of ideas and thoughts, allowing them to have more confidence in expressing their opinions and preferences. In this rather delicate phase, the first conflicts due to different points of view may arise. Therefore, it is important for the team to show an interest in better understanding the objectives that must be followed and shared by everyone. At this point, the team must be organized, and this is possible by setting rules that help everyone to work together - such as deadlines, working hours, behaviour standards and so on -
- *Norming*: this phase begins when the team shows that it learned to manage conflicts among members. At this moment, the latter feels accepted and begins to establish a strong sense of teamwork and belonging as well. The team starts to work hard because at the base there are values such as trust, collaboration, desire

to learn from other members through positive and negative feedback, thus overcoming any conflicting situation.

- *Performing*: in the last phase it is possible to see the maximum effectiveness of the team as it is a single entity that makes decisions and acts to achieve the goal. Very often the members work passionately and feel motivated and interested to bring the team to success.

Team building is a set of training activities which aims to encourage the creation and growth of a group of people working in the same environment. (Fapohunda, 2013).

One of the most significant quotes on this subject are the following words by Michael Jordan:

*"Talent wins games, Teamwork wins championship"* (Freeland, 2018)

The team building is based on the concept that to achieve great goals, the contribution of everyone is necessary as is also the ability to interact with all group - members. Over time, the synergy constantly improves, especially if everybody knows each other well and their roles are clear to the team. Companies have the task of stimulating and facilitating this exchange both inside the office - as, for example, during working hours - and outside, generating work environment grounded on loyalty and trust among employees.

Therefore, team building is a real investment, in economic, costs and profit and time sense. (Fapohunda, 2013; Franz, 2012; Daly, 1996.)

#### 2.2.2.2. Effectiveness of Teamwork

The efficiency of the team depends on many variables because it is essential to have the time necessary for investing in a team that can perform at its best. Time is also crucial for finding and selecting the members who possess skills that are required for achieving the objectives set. Subsequently, it is important to provide relevant training to the members for developing and strengthening the skills for a successful team collaboration. Once the

team is assembled, it is relevant to understand the dynamics that are established within the group. (Lane, Maznevski, DiStefano & Dietz 2009)

Many authors - like Brower, Carr, Wilson - have examined and studied what could be the best ways for developing a very efficient team. Although there is not one way better than the others, there are some features that make a team more effective.

- *Clarity of the objectives*: the efficiency of the team is due to the clarity with which the objectives are defined, which must be specific and achievable. In addition, an essential aspect is the involvement of each employee in the design of the goals, to further strengthen their understanding and to outline the best and most suitable method. (Carr, 1992; Franz, 2012; Daly, 1996.)
- *Dedication*: this characteristic implies that members have the desire to belong into a team and to share both vision and mission. Firms use to share among their employees' principles like importance of beliefs, values and culture. In fact, they encourage company's people to better pursue the vision of the team, increasing their willingness of co-working to achieve goals. The vision, however, is not simply shared, but it conveys enthusiasm, inspiration and desire to engage. Therefore, if a team turns out to be effective it is because of the commitment of its members. (Fapohunda, 2013)
- *Empowerment*: the efficiency of a team is found by analysing the working method. An innovative team is the one that experiments a lot to keep up with development. This is possible if a team is motivated, supported, valued and responsible. In fact, it must have the right freedom and duty to fulfil the goals set. (Wilson, 1996). Although trying and testing is fundamental, it is equally important to avoid high costs due to unsuccessful experimentation, therefore it is effective to define a budget within which it is possible to space for the good of the company. (Brower, 1995)

- *Culture Change*: culture has a significant impact on the efficiency of teamwork because it leads to a comparison of different values, convictions, experiences and operating methods. Culture is the framework of working environment because it is reflected in all its members. In fact, it has an impact on the decision-making process, the organization, for setting and pursuing an objective, on working practices etc. “Behaviour” is a distinctive element in understanding the culture and the differences associated to it. The distinctive methods of approach that belong to members are due to their culture of origin. Therefore, knowing how to behave can be decisive for determining the success of a company. Thanks to the exchange of culture, the organization itself cultivates a new one as each employee has contributed bringing a trait of their personal culture. (Fapohunda, 2013)

### 2.2.3. Multicultural Team

The cultural model today is represented by an increasingly multi-ethnic society, where people with different identities, beliefs and religions live in harmony. This social model is also reflected in companies, which welcome employees with different religions , cultures and ethnicities.

Teams are built considering the skills and abilities that people have, so international interaction turns out to be an increasingly constant reality. (Tomek, 2011)

Therefore, today, if people are determined to cover a specific role within the company, for which specific skills are required, they often prefer to work internationally. Even if they are aware that there is a risk of misunderstandings due to cultural differences, the desire to find the ideal candidate - which can bring greater profits to the company - is bigger. (Lane, Maznevski, DiStefano & Dietz ,2009; Tomek, 2011)

There are different ways of cultural interaction in the workplace, in fact there may be collaboration between employees that get closer while working within the company, but there may be also other cases when employees work from physically distant places. It is the case of virtual teams, where employees, although they share a specific goal, find themselves working in different environments (Johnson, Heimann and O’Neill, 2001)

Therefore, an international team does not necessarily need physical proximity because through specific tools - such as videoconferences, phone calls, e-mails, and so on - it is possible to make a virtual profitable meeting without compromising the wellbeing of the firm. In this case, the only crucial element for the success of international collaboration is to share the project and the purpose. (Johnson, Heimann and O'Neill, 2001)

In an international team, when two people from different cultures need to communicate, there are different alternatives (Henry and Hartzler, 1998):

- A first scenario is that when, by mutual agreement, both employees rely on an interpreter, so they can use their mother tongue. Opting for this solution, although apparently seems simpler, it presents some pitfalls as the interpreter may not grasp the nuances of the speech and, therefore, the translation results to be less accurate and precise. Moreover, the presence of the interpreter does not allow the creation of a relationship between the parties, which is born through verbal and non-verbal language. From an economic point of view, calling an interpreter is expensive for the company.
- A second scenario is when one of the two decides to communicate in the language of the other, demonstrating an extra capacity and, above all, respect for the other culture, which is an essential prerequisite for establishing an excellent relationship
- Finally, there is the possibility that both employees decide to communicate in a neutral language, which, today, is very often associate with English. Although this option seems to be widespread nowadays, a possible problem that may arise is not being able to be as expressive and exhaustive as would happen using the mother tongue.

Working with people who have different backgrounds and cultures is becoming very demanding and not spontaneous at all. In fact, when the same culture is not shared,



conflicts and misunderstandings arise because people can be driven by prejudices and fears, judging what they perceive "different" as a threat. The problems that are generated can be subtle, very difficult to recognize and this allows them to get into more serious issues. (Paul, Samarah, Seetharaman and Mykytyn, 2005).

Therefore, in order to manage international teams in the best way, the first step to do is to identify and recognize which cultural causes trigger the conflicts. Next, after identifying the problems, it is relevant to analyse in detail the circumstances of the situation and then implement the most appropriate strategy for overcoming the conflict. The strategy that will be applied, will reflect the relationship that the company has towards multiculturalism, if the latter represents a resource or a loss in terms of cost and benefits towards the firm itself. As a matter of fact, businesses can have different reactions such as (Riccò, 2007):

- *Exclusive*: if companies adopt an exclusive attitude, it means that managing the diversity is viewed as a problem for them, so they do not decide to tackle the problem because it does not bring any profit.
- *Reactive*: in this context, firms are not indifferent to the problem of diversity, but they are aware that its management will lead the company to bear unaffordable costs. Therefore, the presence of multiculturalism is limited within the company.
- *Proactive*: this is the case in which companies are very determined to manage the conflict at best as cultural diversity is recognized as a vital resource for the entire business organization; in fact, the company is willing to bear the costs because the advantages and the benefits of cultural diversity are higher.

The last category of firms, i.e. proactive ones, are more inclined to manage team diversity and can use multiple different strategies. (Brett, Behfar and Kern, 2006)

- *Adaptation*: this approach very often turns out to be the most effective because it teaches members to tackle the problem autonomously and timing is short. It is

possible to opt for this approach as it is based on the willingness of members for recognizing and identifying cultural differences and the ability to take responsibility for living with them. Therefore, the same members decide to take a step forward by adapting themselves to the new context.

- *Structural intervention:* If, within the team, conflicts are due to negative feelings such as prejudice, envy and feelings of threats, then this approach fits perfectly. The intervention consists in reorganizing the team to reduce conflicts and friction between people.
- *Managerial intervention:* in this context the manager assumes an essential role to mitigate conflicts; in fact, he takes the role of the referee by establishing all rules to be followed to overcome unpleasant situations and avoid repetition in the future.
- *Exit:* this strategy is the least preferred and is used in extreme cases. If the team conflicts are irreparable and have compromised the relationship for the success of the projects, then one or more members are excluded from the group and sometimes fired.

Managing a multicultural team leads the company to undertake a dual change, both cultural and organizational. This is a rather long and delicate path to tackle, both for individual employees and for the company itself. In fact, it is necessary to fully understand the stereotypes that are rooted in the collective thought in order to give the basic tools to overcome these types of barriers. Furthermore, a profound analysis of the essential values - such as ceremonies, company slogans, symbols used, ideas and beliefs – is needed. In fact, only through the appropriate knowledge it is possible to behave correctly in full respect of what is “different”. (Brett, Behfar and Kern, 2006)

Moreover, companies invest in cultural exchange also through projects that aim to enhance the meeting with other cultures even in non-working moments, such as making available structures for meetings between people with different cultures. (Bennett, 2015)

For nowadays companies, it is good that there is maturation and awareness of multiculturalism as an important phenomenon that has an impact on their performance. Therefore, the exchange of cultures on both a symbolic and a physical level is inevitable. It is necessary to know how to manage this condition in the best way to let the firm reaching its business success without being jeopardized by any type of event. (Panda & Panda, 2013)

#### 2.2.4. Advantages and disadvantages of International Team Working

Surely, for companies, the use of an international team can be a source of advantages and disadvantages. (Panda & Panda, 2013)

In fact, companies that are aware of the advantages obtained through international collaborations, might decide on purpose to make use of it since it is seen as an asset for the company itself. Businesses characterized by a more closed and conservative mentality, might not want to adopt the international teams because they address more importance to the disadvantages it may bring.

Members of an international team have different socialization strategies, ways of working and problem solving, according to their cultural identity. In addition to these differences, through the model proposed by Hofstede - which was previously described - further differences are perceived to have an impact on the company dynamics, such as the intensity with which people relate to each other.

Hofstede model deals with the concept of power, thus it is important to verify what entails the distribution of power within a multicultural team. In fact, in teams made up by people coming from countries, which have a high distance from power, the “power” might have a strong role. On the contrary, teams made up by people coming from countries which are not constituted by hierarchical organizations, might not feel any power distance.

Moreover, the degree of individualism and collectivism is a source of different demands from the members; in fact, there may be situations in which people feel more productive through collaboration (low index of individualism), but also cases in which people want to make their will and their ideas prevail (called high index of individualism).

A further difference is the tolerance of people towards uncertainty; in fact, in a teamwork it might happen that people with a different spirit of risk can collide because one is much more innovative and, thus, more inclined towards uncertainty and risk, while another can be more for safety. Differences can also be found in emotions and feelings as well as the level of self-esteem and self-confidence that a member may have.

All the factors presented and many others that were not taken back, are important because they define the characteristics that determine a culture from another. Furthermore, the cooperation of people that is influenced by these traits can bring benefits or disadvantages for companies and people, which will be analysed in more detail in the next paragraphs.

#### 2.2.4.1. Advantages of International Team Working

The collaboration in an international team leads to many benefits and this is due to multiple factors such as workplace, the organization you work for, the people you work with and so on. The benefits that may be obtained are classified mainly into two categories: benefits for the employee and benefits for the team, but in both cases are advantages for the company itself. (Bennett, 2015)

The cooperation in an international team represents an opportunity for growth and experience for the employee. In fact, in order to successfully deal with the collaboration in a multicultural team, very often the member works on himself, thus leading him to mature and to learn a lot. Thanks to the contact with different realities, the employee - who is very flexible by nature - develops an open-minded attitude and a spirit of adaptation towards both situations and people. (Peter, 2017)

Problematic situations characterized by misunderstandings, typical in the work of any type of team, are seen as an opportunity to manage difficulties, thus improving their problem solving and understanding skills. A further interesting aspect concerns communication. The daily communication with colleagues in a language that is not native, allows the improvement of a new foreign language, enriching the own culture and communication skills. The language that is most used today is English, so its refinement from a technical point of view, helps to improve listening skills towards others. (Cox, T.H and Blake, S. 1991)

The comparison with different cultures from one's own, allows one to make important personal progress as he is more curious about the different. Moreover, there is an improvement also professionally speaking because he can learn new strategies and new methods to perform the same job, taking the best from all the cultures that they know. (Stahl et al. 2006)

The benefits are equally numerous also for the team. One of the biggest advantages is represented by the exchange of information that enriches the group; in fact, sharing different knowledge and experiences from different backgrounds, cultures and traditions is a source of success and enrichment for the team. Each team member turns out to be a precious and educational resource for all the others because there is the attitude of learning from one another. (Peter, 2017)

In more complex situations, where discussions emerge, the comparisons of ideas are more stimulating and interesting. As a matter of fact, in heterogeneous groups there is a tendency to observe the problem from different perspectives, thus generating a greater number of possible effective solutions. In addition, mixed groups are more susceptible to continuous improvement due to the fact that they share and develop knowledge through cooperation. Moreover, shared knowledge must be implemented to the team through a specific method so that everyone enriches themselves and the team becomes successful for the company. (Berg, 2012)

Therefore, when each team member commits itself to the maximum to achieve the goal set, as a consequence there is an increase of the quality of the collaboration. Good teamwork also has an influence on the performance, which in turn has a positive impact on business success. (Daft, 2004)

#### 2.2.4.2. Disadvantages of International Team Working

Despite the many advantages, working in an international environment with people from different cultures may also generate some difficulties and problems within groups and companies.

The prejudices and stereotypes that identify each culture may have an impact on how individuals relate themselves to people who belong to different geographical places. It might happen that, because of prejudices, a tension environment and job dissatisfaction is created, although there has been no attempt to get to know the other person.

One of the first differences that is immediately perceived is communication. Members of an international team have to deal with two types of linguistic differences: vocabulary and language style. In the first case, the difficulties are misunderstandings of specific terms due to a different pronunciation or use of slang and idioms. In the second case refers to the fact that people can be more or less direct in expressing themselves. (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

A very important aspect of communication is represented by non-verbal behaviours that are divided into three categories (Harris, Moran and Moran, 2004):

- Communication through gestures, facial expressions and posture. Body language varies widely from one culture to another and only a few gestures have a universal meaning. For example, a high eye-contact for some cultures is considered a sign of attention and respect, for others it means being rude. In some cultures, people express their emotions openly, while in other feelings are considered part of the most personal and intimate sphere. Physical contact also has different meanings

according to culture; in fact, there are cultures that tend to maintain an important gap between people (like Japan), while in other cultures people touch each other and there is not a big distance between them (like Italy).

- The way to communicate something, regardless of the content, varies from culture to culture. In fact, there are people who speak faster and others slowly, people who tend to have a higher tone of voice and others calmer. Many people are used to speak loudly and laugh, while others tend to communicate even through silence.
- Communication "material" - clothes, objects, furnishings - are important features to better understand the interlocutor and his culture.

Another feature that might differs one culture from the others is its value system. The latter may have an essential role in guiding the individual in interacting with the social environment. Each culture elaborates its values - which derive from their lifestyle, from religious beliefs, from history - and manifests them differently. Therefore, people who work together and defend their ideals can find themselves in conflict with each other. (Schreiber, 1996)

A further reason that might lead into a conflict within an international team is the different method of work organization; for instance, some employees might be more prone to make decisions on their own, while in other cultures decisions are driven by the entire group. Moreover, in some culture decisions may be taken after a careful collection and control of available options, while in others the process of decision-making is faster.

The perception of time may vary and lead to disputes within an international team. It changes from nation to nation and this also has an impact on business organization. When an appointment or a meeting is set at a certain time, many people do not pay much attention to the timing, thus, they are more likely to be late. For other cultures punctuality is fundamental and for this reason it is necessary to respect any timetable set. (Arman, G and Adair, C.K., 2012)

With reference to time, it is possible to speak of polychronic and monochronic behaviours. The latter perform one operation at a time, fragmenting it according to the tasks to be done. These types of people are more organized, willing to respect deadlines and very precise. The polychrones perform different activities together in the same period of time. They are people who tend to get distracted easily and likely to change often schedules. (Rosinski, 2010)

One of the most important issues that can arise by cooperating and having different perception of time is that - those who are monochronic - can consider the attitude of polychronic colleagues as disorganized and unreliable. While, on the contrary, polychronic people can see monochronic colleagues as people that are not available and present in situations of urgent decisions taking process. (Rosinski, 2010).



### 2.3. MODEL ELABORATED

All the information and considerations obtained so far are useful for developing a model that can be applied to the topic of this thesis to explain it in a clearer and more concise manner. Albeit some of the variables chosen are already studied by other authors, the way they are combined together makes the model unique and different.

As a first step, the variables - that can have the greatest influence to extrapolate the most pertinent information to answer the research question - were identified.

Subsequently, a plausible outcome was hypothesized from the identified inputs.

The variables chosen are the following:

*- Neighbour Countries/Culture:*

People who belong to the same cultural area (Latin countries, Anglo-Saxon countries, Nordic countries, Asian countries, African countries), should not encounter any problems when it comes to cooperation because they already are familiar with the culture. For these reasons, for them will be easy to adapt to some behavioural-social rules since they are so similar from one country to another.

While, if there is a clash between countries that do not belong to the same cultural area - for instance Latin people working with a Nordic people – then the collaboration might be much more challenging, even though it may lead to some misunderstanding and dealing with some problems linked to cultural differences.

*- Number of multicultural experiences:*

People, who have more experiences in international teams, might be more willing to adapt easily to those features that usually don't belong to their culture. This is possible because, over time, they have gained much more knowledge, hence, they will not be struggling while facing new realities.

On the contrary, people who do not have many experiences, will face more difficulties in accepting new realities, thus, they will need more time to adapt to new different cultures.

*- Degree of Prejudices:*

This variable is strongly linked to the one explained above. In fact, having prejudices is not a “wrong” attitude. It is quite natural to have an initial opinion about someone or something that you have never had the opportunity to get to know in depth.

In fact, people who are more open-minded might not have lot of prejudices towards other cultures, but just curiosity to get to know other beliefs. As a matter of fact, they might enrich themselves by grasping as more information from another culture as they can.

To the contrary, people who are afraid of diversity might not be open to cooperate with people from other nationalities. Their prejudices do not give them the opportunity to a healthy confrontation of cultures

*- Language:*

For people who know more languages it is much easier to communicate and have less misunderstandings. While, the lack of the knowledge of foreign language limits the communication, thus leading to miss-comprehension between different cultures. (Browaeys and Price, 2011)

*- Habits*

People who have different perception of the same concept will have more conflict when it comes to collaborate together:

- for instance, timing might be conceived differently according to the culture, in fact there are punctual people and others that do not see any problem if they are late. (Arman, G and Adair, C.K., 2012)

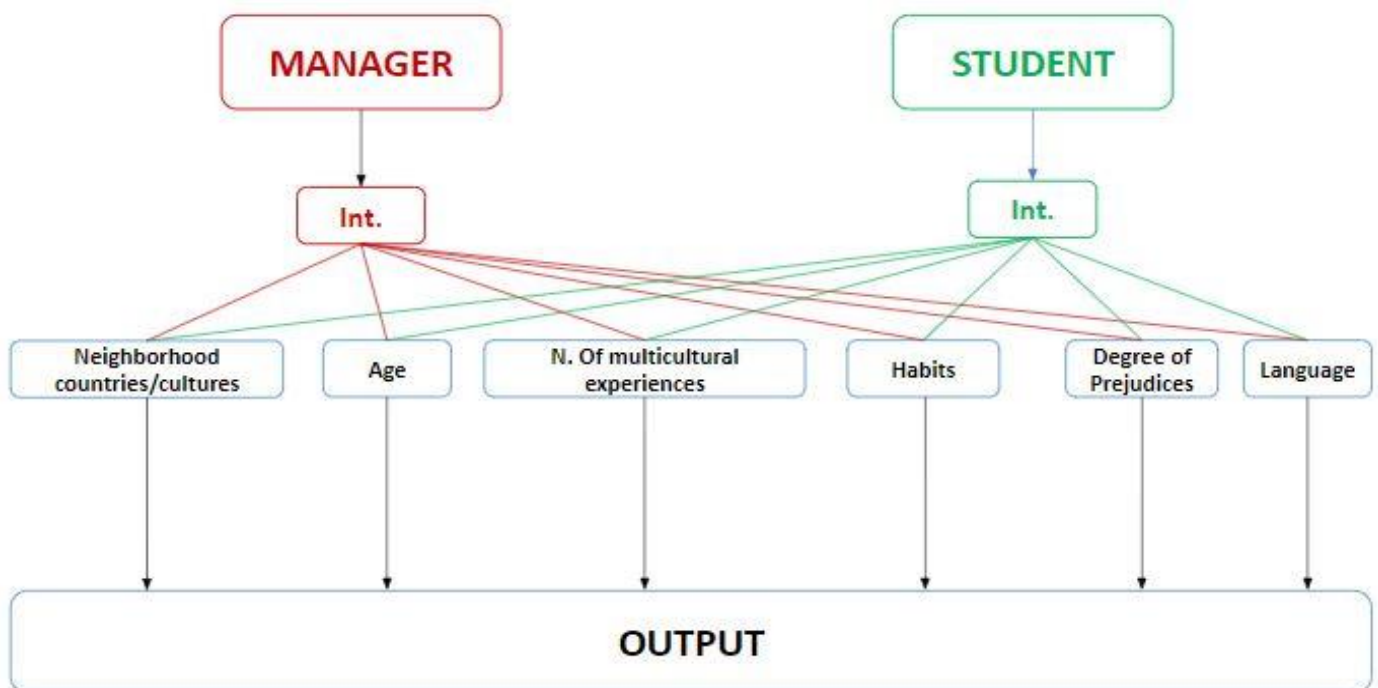
- another example is power: there are people who speak freely even though formally they cover the bottom of the social pyramid; on the contrary, there are people who belongs to more rigid organizations and cultures, thus they tend to behave according to specific rules. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede, 1980)

- *Age:*

Even age can be considered a valid variable for understanding multicultural collaboration. In fact, the latest generations, like Generation Y, which has grown in the technological boom and are always connected and digital oriented, is expected to be maybe less influenced by prejudice and more open to the confrontation of new realities. (Douglas Main, 2017)

All the variables explained so far can be applied both to managers and to students. The interview carried out with managers and students will be used to identify which outputs will be obtained from each variable. The illustrative scheme below can help to better visualize how the elaborated model will be applied to the interviews. Moreover, the model will be taken up again in the chapter of the conclusions to verify if the hypothesized outcomes have been confirmed or not.

Figure 4: Model Elaborated



### 3. METHODOLOGIES

In this chapter will be exposed the thesis' methodology, considering both the idea to deepen the topic and the way in which it was developed, by motivating all the choices taken to study this theme. Finally, there will be a paragraph devoted entirely to the credibility of the data obtained.

#### 3.1. The Approach

The path taken to develop the dissertation is based on the topic of Cross – Cultural Management and its implications and effects on specific people such as managers and students. The desire to analyse this topic arose from the personal experiences I gain during my university education.

Indeed, during my bachelor's degree, I had a volunteering experience with a non-profit organization – Aiesec Trieste – where I was involved in an international team. Subsequently, I continued the second year of the master's degree in Finland where I have been in contact with a culture totally different from the Italian and Albanian one, both from academic and personal point of view.

Such situations have allowed me to meet many people with international working experience. Therefore, having developed a very close relationship with many of them, I had the chance to discuss with them about cultural diversity and to understand their point of view on this topic.

As I was spotting interesting and different opinions, where some findings were even unexpected, I figure out that it might be appropriate and motivating to further develop this theme.

Although I am aware that this research can be developed even more in depth, I concentrated on a qualitative study where the people interviewed being managers (5) and students (6) with international working experience. The main reason for this choice was

because these categories very often have had the opportunity to confront and collaborate with people belonging to other cultures. Therefore, it is possible to have a direct comparison and testimony on the implications that cultural diversity may have – professionally and personally – on people.

### 3.2. Qualitative Research

In order to conduct a survey, there are several methods that help to obtain the necessary data which are crucial to study and analyse a topic. The main important methods are the quantitative and qualitative method, which are valid and functional for the success of the research. (Madisa, 2019)

In order for the study to be as complete and meaningful as possible, it is necessary to adopt the method that is most suitable depending on the type of research that is carried out. In this way, unnecessary errors due to the wrong choice of the method can be avoided, since this choice affects the results and findings of the topic analysed. (Madisa, 2019)


Quantitative data are used as a support for research based on concrete, numerical and measurable facts. They are also called statistical data because they are measurable. In fact, these data are characterized by a better quality because even words can be converted into numbers by associating them with a specific value. Usually, the way to obtain such data is through closed questions, which imply a short and sharp answers. (DeFranzo, 2011)

On the other hand, there are qualitative data that do not aim to measure the data obtained, but the information obtained is exploited to give an exhaustive explanation about the topic that is addressed. For this reason, these can be considered personal data, since it takes into consideration people's impressions and opinions, which are difficult to measure precisely because they are personal points of view. (DeFranzo, 2011)

The figure below highlights the main differences between the two methods of data analysis.

Figure 5: Qualitative Analysis VS Quantitative Analysis. (Madisa, 2019)

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS VERSUS QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis	Quantitative analysis
It is a subjective analysis that is more concerned with non-statistical data that cannot be computed	It is an objective analysis that quantifies data
Typical data include color, gender, nationality, religion and many more	Typical data include measurable quantities such as length, size, weight, mass and many more
The analysis is used to understand why a certain phenomenon occurs	The analysis is concerned with how many or how much a certain phenomenon occurs
Sample is small and is non-representative of the entire population	The sample is large and can be generalized to cover the entire population
Interprets and understands social interactions	Test hypotheses and give future predictions
Research methodology is exploratory	Research methodology is often conclusive
	

In this thesis, where the human component is fundamental in order to be able to answer the research question and its objectives, the use of the qualitative method was chosen.

The reason behind this choice is that this method gives rise to a conversation between the interviewee and the interviewer. Moreover, the interviewer guides the whole interview putting the interviewee at ease in order to be able to express himself freely. Thus, in this way it is possible to obtain more detailed information on the topic. (Edwards and Holland, 2013)

Furthermore, qualitative research is useful when a phenomenon is not very well known and when the analysis is characterized by substantial differences, such as the presence of multi-ethnic people. (Edwards and Holland, 2013)

In addition, professor Piergiorgio Corbetta (1999) has provided the following definition of qualitative analysis:

*“You can define the qualitative interview as a conversation:*

- a) caused by the interviewer,*
- b) addressed to subjects chosen on the basis of a survey plan*
- c) in a substantial number,*
- d) having cognitive purposes,*
- e) guided by the interviewer,*
- f) on the basis of a flexible and non-standardized interrogation scheme”*

What differentiates this type of approach from others, is the ability to penetrate in a profound way into the interviewee's perspective. In fact, by doing so, it is possible to acquire relevant information by capturing the nuances, interpretations and personal points of view the interviewee shares. (Edwards and Holland, 2013)

Furthermore, the qualitative survey, which is less structured, allows to gather information that gives a deeper analysis of the topic developed. Nevertheless, the data collected is more difficult to analyse precisely because the emotional component is present, which is not always easy to interpret correctly. (DeFranzo, 2011)

Another important aspect of the non-structured analysis makes the qualitative interview rather flexible. Therefore, it is a tool that can be modelled and adapted according to the context, environment and person addressed.

It is possible to identify three types of interviews associated with a different degree of flexibility, as it can be seen in the figure below: (Corbetta, 1999)

- Structured Interview
- Semi-structured Interview
- Unstructured Interview

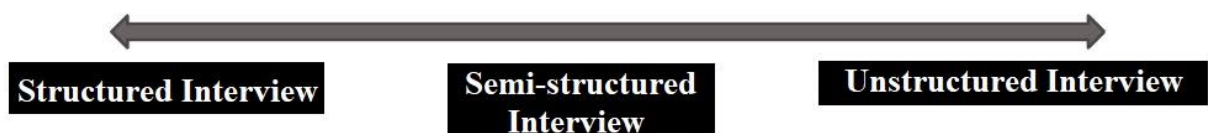


Figure 6: Different types of interviews (Corbetta, 1999)

The structured interview is the most rigid of the three interviews. Its rigidity consists in asking the interviewee a series of open questions in the same order. Hence, although there



is some freedom in answering questions, all the interviewees will be guided in the same order and in the same way to give relevant information regarding a topic. For this reason, it can be considered a hybrid between the quantitative and qualitative method. In fact, on one hand questions are standardized - as the same queries are asked to all candidates – but on the other hand, information obtained are unstructured, as each interviewee will respond according to his/her own experience and knowledge. (Corbetta, 1999)

The semi-structured interview is characterized by some general questions that guide the entire interview, or, there are some essential topics that will guide the interview process from the beginning to the end. This aspect represents the structured part.

Unlike the structured interview explained above, there is no order to follow in this context. Indeed, very often may happen that the candidate anticipates the answer of another question, or even he/she can introduce an interesting topic to be developed, that the interviewer had not thought of. (Spina, 2018)

As can be seen, the degree of freedom to follow the interview is higher, since the track that the interviewer prepares is only a guideline and/or a reminder of important topics regarding the research question .

The unstructured interview has no guideline element, the only pivot is the general theme that will be developed. Therefore, each interview turns out to be unique because there are no questions that will be asked in a more or less detailed manner. Indeed, the interviewer will set the theme to be addressed and will allow the interviewee to expose his ideas, opinions and knowledge freely. (Spina, 2018)

Obviously, there is the risk of the candidate going off topic, therefore the presence of the interviewer is essential since he will monitor the whole situation and interfere when the conversation touches on irrelevant topics for this study. (Spina, 2018)

In this type of interview, the flexibility is even greater as the interviews can have different duration, depending on the willingness of the candidates to express their opinions and to address different topics related to the general theme. (Spina, 2018)

### 3.3. Data Credibility

Considering the work done so far, it can be said that the research question can be considered valid since, to be able to give a satisfactory answer, it is necessary to acquire a lot of knowledge by consulting the theoretical framework. Secondly, it is required also to gather useful data through the appropriate interview. Thus, for this type of study, the semi-structured interview method was used.

This method was chosen because the topic of the thesis concerns the multicultural theme. In order to obtain relevant information, it is important to leave a certain freedom to the interviewees to express themselves without imposing particular limitations.

This approach is also important for the so-called credibility of the data; the reliability of the data appears to be relevant because through open questions, to which comments have been added to further reinforce the themes that were proposed, it has been possible to extrapolate crucial information for the reprocessing of the data.

Furthermore, the unstructured interview was not chosen for the purpose of this study, because arguments or questions - which served as a guideline - were necessary in order to obtain information regarding the three objectives of the research question.

In fact, since the beginning, the thesis had a clear goal: to provide an overview of the impact of multicultural experience on people, through the cooperation in an international team. In order to provide the most appropriate answer, it was necessary to set some objectives interrelated among each other. This step turned out to be fundamental because it helped to identify all the topics, on the basis of which, the guideline questions were formulated.

Albeit initially the aim was to obtain all the data through a semi-structured interview, this was not possible for two managers, who due to their frequent commitments, preferred to calmly respond to questions sent via email.

Therefore, two people have been subjected to a structured interview, which could have more or less significant repercussions in the analysis of the data. Hence, this will be discovered later where it will be taken up again in the chapter of the conclusions.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

This chapter is one of the most important chapters of the dissertation as it aims to give an explanation to the research question posed at the beginning. The chapter will be divided into two macro paragraphs.

The first paragraph will deal with the description of the data obtained and how they were processed in order to obtain a greater amount of information. In the second paragraph the data will be observed considering the two points of view, managers and students' one.

##### 4.1. Findings

The data obtained for the analysis of the thesis comes from managers and students, who have been involved in various group projects with multi-ethnic people. To be precise, the managers were 5 while the students were 6; moreover, among these 11 people, 6 were male while 5 were females, as can be seen from the table below.

Type of observations		
quantitative	n.	%
Managers	5	45,45%
Students	6	54,55%
Male	6	54,55%
Female	5	45,45%

Table 7: Types of Observations 1

Furthermore, the following table shows the nationalities of the people who were subjected to the interview. Knowing nationalities is crucial in order to better comprehend the dynamics that interviewees develop both with people from countries of similar culture and with people belonging to countries of different cultures. In fact, the dynamics that can be settled can be varied, and very often it may be expected that between countries with similar culture, everything will run smoothly without any problem. On the other hand, when the cultural differences between countries seem to be greater, nobody can be surprised by the difficulties that people can make between themselves.

Type of observations	
Managers	Students
<b>Manager 1. Finland</b>	<b>Student 1 Turkey</b>
<b>Manager 2. San Salvador</b>	<b>Student 2 Italy - Spain</b>
<b>Manager 3 Venezuela</b>	<b>Student 3 Albania</b>
<b>Manager 4 Germany</b>	<b>Student 4 Italy</b>
<b>Manager 5 Finland</b>	<b>Student 5 Argentina</b>
	<b>Student 6 Argentina</b>
5	6

Table 8: Types of Observations 2

As it can be seen from the table above, people questioned come from the European and American continent, therefore, it will be studied how people coming from these two continents interact with others.

The information obtained through the interviews have been elaborated in order to divide them into different sections that will help to understand and analyse the thesis' theme.

The sections are as follows:

- The first section aims to analyse the countries with which the people interviewed have collaborated.
- The second section's purpose is to examine in detail the level of cooperation with different cultures; specifically, whether it was easy or difficult to collaborate with a particular culture / country.
- The third section aims to elaborate the advantages and disadvantages obtained through multicultural collaborations.
- The last section, the fourth, focuses on the personal considerations of all the interviewees.

To better comprehend the data obtained, it is important to deeply analyse each section in the next paragraphs, according to their content.

#### 4.1.1. Culture impact

This paragraph will be dedicated to the analysis of the data elaborated in the first two sections, which refer to the level of collaboration of the candidates with different countries / cultures.

The first section deals with the cultural-matrix, which can be examined from two perspectives. The first, and also the more general one, indicates from which continents the collaboration of the people interviewed come, which are Europe, America and Asia. In detail, all respondents clashed at least once with some countries from Europe and Asia, while only 9 out of 11 cooperated with people belonging to the American continent. Specifically, with regard to the latter, only 3 people had relations with the countries of North America, 4 people only with the countries of South America and finally, 2 people had relations with the whole continent. The other two continents, Africa and Oceania, have had few collaborations: in fact, only 2 were registered for the first and 1 for the second.

From this first perspective, it appears that the greatest interactions take place between the two continents where the interviewees come from, namely America and Europe, to which is added the largest continent on earth, Asia.

	North America	South America	Europe	Asia	Africa	Oceania
<b>M1 (FIN)</b>		-			-	-
<b>M2 (S.SALV)</b>	-				-	-
<b>M3 (VEN)</b>						-
<b>M4 (GER)</b>		-				
<b>M5 (FIN)</b>		-			-	-
<b>S1 (TUR)</b>	-	-			-	-
<b>S2 (ITA - SPA)</b>	-				-	-
<b>S3 (ALB)</b>					-	-
<b>S4 (ITA)</b>	-	-			-	-
<b>S5 (ARG)</b>	-				-	
<b>S6 (ARG)</b>	-				-	

Table 9. Culture-matrix: continental point of view

Table 10. Culture-matrix: countries point of view part 1

	Canada	USA	Perù	France	Germany	Netherlands	Denmark	Iceland	UK	Finland	Sweden	Poland	Belgium	Austria
<b>M1 (FIN)</b>	-		-	-			-	-			-	-		
<b>M2 (S.SALV)</b>	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-				-	-
<b>M3 (VEN)</b>		-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>M4 (GER)</b>				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>M5 (FIN)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>S1 (TUR)</b>	-	-	-			-			-	-		-	-	-
<b>S2 (ITA-SPA)</b>	-	-	-		-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>S3 (ALB)</b>	-		-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>S4 (ITA)</b>	-	-	-	-		-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>S5 (ARG)</b>	-	-				-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>S6 (ARG)</b>	-	-				-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-

Table 11. Culture-matrix: countries point of view part 2

	Italy	Spain	Portugal	Czech republic	Croatia	Greece	Turkey	Vietnam	China	Japan	Taiwan	Mongolia	India	Australia	Algeria
<b>M1 (FIN)</b>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>M2 (S. SALV)</b>			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>M3 (VEN)</b>			-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	
<b>M4 (GER)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-				-	-	-			-
<b>M5 (FIN)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
<b>S1 (TUR)</b>			-	-	-	-	-	-				-	-	-	-
<b>S2 (ITA-SPA)</b>			-		-	-		-	-	-	-	-		-	-
<b>S3 (ALB)</b>				-				-	-	-	-	-		-	-
<b>S4 (ITA)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-		-	-	-
<b>S5 (ARG)</b>			-	-	-	-	-			-		-	-		-
<b>S6 (ARG)</b>			-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-			-



Zooming in on the general analysis, it is possible to understand and list all countries involved, as can be seen in Tables 10-11.

As can be seen in the two tables above, the interviewees stated that the countries with which they had the greatest collaborations are European countries. In addition, those with the greatest number of collaborations are the following in descending order:

- Germany with 7/11: the information was obtained from 2 managers and 5 students
- Italy with 7/11: the information was obtained from 3 managers and 4 students
- Spain with 6/11: the information was obtained from 2 managers and 4 students
- France with 5/11: the information was obtained from 1 manager and 4 students

Other countries that have received similar feedback are listed in alphabetical order:

- Australia 3/11: the information was obtained from 1 manager and 2 students
- China 6/11: the information was obtained from 3 managers and 3 students
- India 5/11: the information was obtained from 2 managers and 3 students
- Peru 5/11: the information was obtained from 3 managers and 2 students
- Turkey 3/11: the information was obtained from 1 manager and 2 students
- USA 3/11: the information was obtained from 2 managers and 1 student

Although it is essential to know with which countries the respondents have developed a multicultural cooperation, another important factor to take into consideration is the intensity with which the collaborations have been carried out.

In order to have a more meaningful analysis, considering that only 11 people were interviewed, it was decided to group the countries under certain categories respecting the cultures of the countries under consideration. Moreover, to facilitate the understanding of the following tables, a legend has been provided, which associates a colour to the intensity of the collaboration.

Legend	
	Easy
	Low difficulty
	Moderate difficulty
	High difficulty

Figure 7: Legend of level of collaboration

The countries have been divided into the following categories:

- *Anglo-Saxon countries*, which include Canada, USA, UK, Australia
- *Nordic countries*, which include Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden
- *Germanic countries*, which include Germany, Holland, Poland, Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic
- *Latin countries*, which include Peru, San Salvador, Venezuela, Argentina, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal
- *Balkan countries*, which include Albania, Croatia, Greece, Turkey
- *Asian countries*, which include Vietnam, China, Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia and India.

The Anglo-Saxon countries, especially the former colonies of the UK, are characterized by the strong influence of the United Kingdom on culture, politics, language and religion. Indeed, this strong bond can also be seen in the resumption of the English flag, as in the case of Australia and New Zealand. (Severgnini, 2001)

People interviewed belong to different categories, such as Nordic countries, Latin countries, Germanic countries and Balkan countries. Despite this variegated origin, all those who have had the opportunity to work in a team with people from the Anglo-Saxon countries, had positive feedback and found no problem in adapting to this type of culture. This is evident in the table below.

Table 12: The Anglo-Saxon countries

	Canada	USA	UK	Australia
M1 (FIN)	-			-
M2 (S. SALV)	-	-	-	-
M3 (VEN)		-	-	-
M4 (GER)			-	-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)	-	-	-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-	-	-	-
S3 (ALB)	-		-	-
S4 (ITA)	-	-	-	
S5 (ARG)	-	-	-	
S6 (ARG)	-	-		-

The Nordic countries, in western Europe, have the characteristic that they share together sections of history and culture.

Also, in this case, people being interviewed found no particular difficulty in dealing with these countries. However, there is an exception, as a manager, coming from a Latin country, found a slight difficulty in collaborating with countries like Sweden and Finland, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 13: Nordic countries

	Denmark	Iceland	Finland	Sweden
M1 (FIN)	-	-		-
M2 (S.SALV)	-	-		
M3 (VEN)	-	-	-	-
M4 (GER)		-	-	-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)			-	
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-	-	-	-
S3 (ALB)	-	-	-	-
S4 (ITA)		-	-	-
S5 (ARG)	-	-	-	-
S6 (ARG)	-	-	-	-

Regarding the feedback concerning Germanic countries, in general there is a good consideration in working in groups with people belonging to these states and cultures. However, were found cases where there was a slight difficulty in collaboration and only one case in which there was a great difficulty in working in a team. Precisely, this was the testimony of a Latin student towards people from the Czech Republic.

Table 14: Germanic countries

	Germany	Netherlands	Poland	Belgium	Austria	Czech republic
M1 (FIN)			-			-
M2 (S.SALV)	-	-		-	-	-
M3 (VEN)	-	-	-	-	-	-
M4 (GER)		-	-	-		-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)		-	-	-	-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-		-	-	-	
S3 (ALB)		-	-	-	-	-
S4 (ITA)		-	-	-	-	-
S5 (ARG)		-	-	-	-	-
S6 (ARG)		-	-	-	-	-

The countries that belong to the Latin culture represent the first category, analysed so far, which did not have an entirely positive output. As a matter of fact, it is clear that the interviewees found in their multicultural experiences different type of difficulties: low, moderate and high. What is interesting in this case is that the difficulties were not encountered by people who belong to different cultures, but by people who have Latin origins.

Table 15: Latin countries

	Perù	France	Italy	Spain	Portugal
M1 (FIN)	-	-		-	-
M2 (S.SALV)		-			-
M3 (VEN)					-
M4 (GER)			-	-	-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)	-				-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-		-	-	-
S3 (ALB)	-	-			
S4 (ITA)	-	-	-	-	-
S5 (ARG)	-				-
S6 (ARG)	-				-

As for the Balkan countries, it was not possible to obtain much information. In fact, there were only two positive testimonies, one of which came from a Balkan student and the other from a Latin student.

Table 16: Balkan countries

	Croatia	Greece	Turkey
M1 (FIN)	-	-	-
M2 (S.SALV)	-	-	-
M3 (VEN)	-	-	-
M4 (GER)	-	-	-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)	-	-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-	-	
S3 (ALB)			
S4 (ITA)	-	-	-
S5 (ARG)	-	-	-
S6 (ARG)	-	-	-

The last big category is represented by Asian countries. The feedback obtained is rather negative because almost all the interviewees had at least once a very difficult work experience with people from this great region.

Table 17: Asiatic countries

	Vietnam	China	Japan	Taiwan	Mongolia	India
M1 (FIN)	-		-	-	-	-
M2 (S.SALV)	-	-	-	-	-	-
M3 (VEN)	-		-	-	-	-
M4 (GER)	-		-	-	-	
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-	-	-	-
S1 (TUR)	-				-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-	-	-	-	-	
S3 (ALB)	-	-	-	-	-	
S4 (ITA)	-	-		-		-
S5 (ARG)			-		-	-
S6 (ARG)	-		-	-	-	

In order to better explain the reasons for these levels of collaboration, it will be analysed by applying the models that define cultural differences, such as the Hofstede model. In this regard, the value of each dimension has been associated to the reference country. After that, an arithmetic average was performed for all the countries in each category to find the average value for each dimension. In order to obtain these data, reference has been made to the Hofstede Insight site, which allows the possibility of comparing Hofstede parameters between different countries.

Table 18: Hofstede Model application 1 (Hofstede Insights, 2019)

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Canada	39	80	52	48	36
USA	40	91	62	46	26
UK	35	89	66	35	51
Australia	36	90	61	51	21
<b>Anglo-Saxon countries</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>34</b>
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35
Iceland	30	60	10	50	28
Finland	33	63	26	59	38
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53
<b>Nordic Countries</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>
Austria	11	55	79	70	60
Belgium	65	75	54	94	82
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	70
Germany	35	67	66	65	83
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67
Poland	68	60	64	93	38
<b>Germanic Countries</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>67</b>

Through the application of the Hofstede model, it is possible to understand why the interviewees, who collaborated with people from the Anglo-Saxon countries and the Nordic countries, did not have any difficulties.

From the results obtained, it can be seen that the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries tend to have a low score for the PDI variable. Therefore, a more balanced situation prevails due to a lack of a clear social distinction. Moreover, as a direct consequence, these countries tend to have a more individualistic culture (88 Anglo-Saxon; 67 Nordic). This means that they try to be autonomous and self-sufficient in both business and private life.

Another reason why the interviewees felt comfortable, when it comes to work with people belonging to these cultures, is because they are tolerant countries towards different ideas and opinions, as it can be seen from the following quote:

*"In America they're open to share ideas, to discuss and they have the mindset that even though you don't like the idea of someone, you have to take it into account and to consider that opinion either way, even though you might think that it is not a valid idea."* (Student 3, Albania)

As for the Germanic countries, also regarding these nations, no particular complications occurred. However, here it is possible to find a first clash of cultures. In fact, it is clear that respondents of Latin origin have had misunderstandings with these countries. Misunderstandings are due to the concept of time and the way of working, as can be seen below.

*"I am used to work in a friendly environment, where people are not only colleagues but also people to hang out with, so I used to take some pause and relax with people, drinking a tea or playing some games and then start working again, or once we finished to work, we can hangout. But while I was working in Strasbourg with French people and German, they just wanted to work and nothing more, there wasn't a friendly environment. They were more work-oriented, they didn't leave space to get to know."* (Student 5, Argentina)

This last statement can also be traced back to a dimension identified by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner. The dimension in question is Neutral vs Affective, where there is the distinction of people who tend to show more emotions (affective) and those who tend to have more serious (neutral).



Table 19: Hofstede Model application 2 (Hofstede Insights, 2019)

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
France	68	71	43	86	63
Italy	50	76	70	75	61
Portugal	63	27	31	99	28
Spain	57	51	42	86	48
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20
Peru	64	16	42	87	25
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16
Latin Countries	62	40	50	86	35
Albania	90	20	80	70	61
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58
Greece	60	35	57	100	45
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46
Balkan Countries	72	31	56	84	53
Vietnam	70	20	40	30	57
China	80	20	66	30	87
Japan	54	46	95	92	88
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	93
India	77	48	56	40	51
Mongolia	-	-	-	-	-
Asiatic Countries	68	30	60	52	75

The groups of states that have experienced frequent problems are Latin countries and Asian countries. Considering Asian countries everyone said they had dealt with problematic situations with them. The greatest difficulties concern different uses and customs due to different rooted cultures. These habits, therefore, also have an impact on work. In fact, the organization is conceived in a different way because for some Asian



countries' things can even be done at last minute, while some of the Western cultures tend to organize work in advance.

To better understand what interviewees claimed, below are reported some statements.

*"it was difficult to connect with Mongolian habit and culture, even though people were great there, they were welcoming, curious to meet someone who was European. They were late and sometimes I had to wait a lot, they weren't organized a lot, I was receiving my daily tasks the morning very late and I couldn't prepare better myself"* (Student 4, Italy)

*"It was hard to work with Indian because they made small groups within a big group. They were acting in a isolating thing, they prefer to work with people who were closer to their culture because they think it was easier and by doing so, they just ignored the rest"* (Student 3, Albania)

When was asked to a manager to say if there was a country with which was hard to work, she replied as follow:

*"Probably with Asians considering the differences are bigger (e.g. when Finnish say something, we typically mean it and can be quite direct, Asians may say something to please you or for other reasons like saving the face etc.)"* (Manager 5, Finland)

This statement is further strengthened by the following issued by a student:

*"Asian because I spent much more time to get to know their work. Moreover, they are very shy, they don't express themselves, they take time to take decision, they think a lot about taking time, while I would like to save time."* (Student 1, Turkey)

These last two testimonies are also confirmed by analysing the level of China's UAI, which is equal to 30. This means that the Chinese tend to remain vague, to be ambiguous when dealing with new and uncertain situations. In fact, very often, their way of communicating turns out to be very tough to understand especially for the western regions because of the accentuated ambiguity. (Hofstede Insights, 2019)

Regarding Latin countries, even with these nations the collaboration has been difficult and problematic. The surprising aspect in this context is that the complications were also perceived by people who come from countries with Latin culture.

*“[...] in Italy is too important to have a good average and a good grade, for other culture is not such important, they are more focused on finishing their degree and this has an impact in projects because you can work for different purposes. I used to work in Italy as a waitress and in the university, so I didn't have all my day to work for projects, but italians sometime wanted to spend all day for the project.” (Student 5, Argentina).*

This testimony of collaboration is confirmed by a dimension of Hofstede MAS. In fact, Italy has achieved a result equal to 70 and this makes it a country very inclined to the search for success (masculine society). Indeed, from an early age people are looking to the competition, both sporting and academic, because they have the concentration that winning and being the best is fundamental to feeling fulfilled in life. (Hofstede Insights, 2019)

There is also a situation in which the person who comes from a country finds himself badly collaborating with his fellow countrymen because of "their" culture, since he feels different.

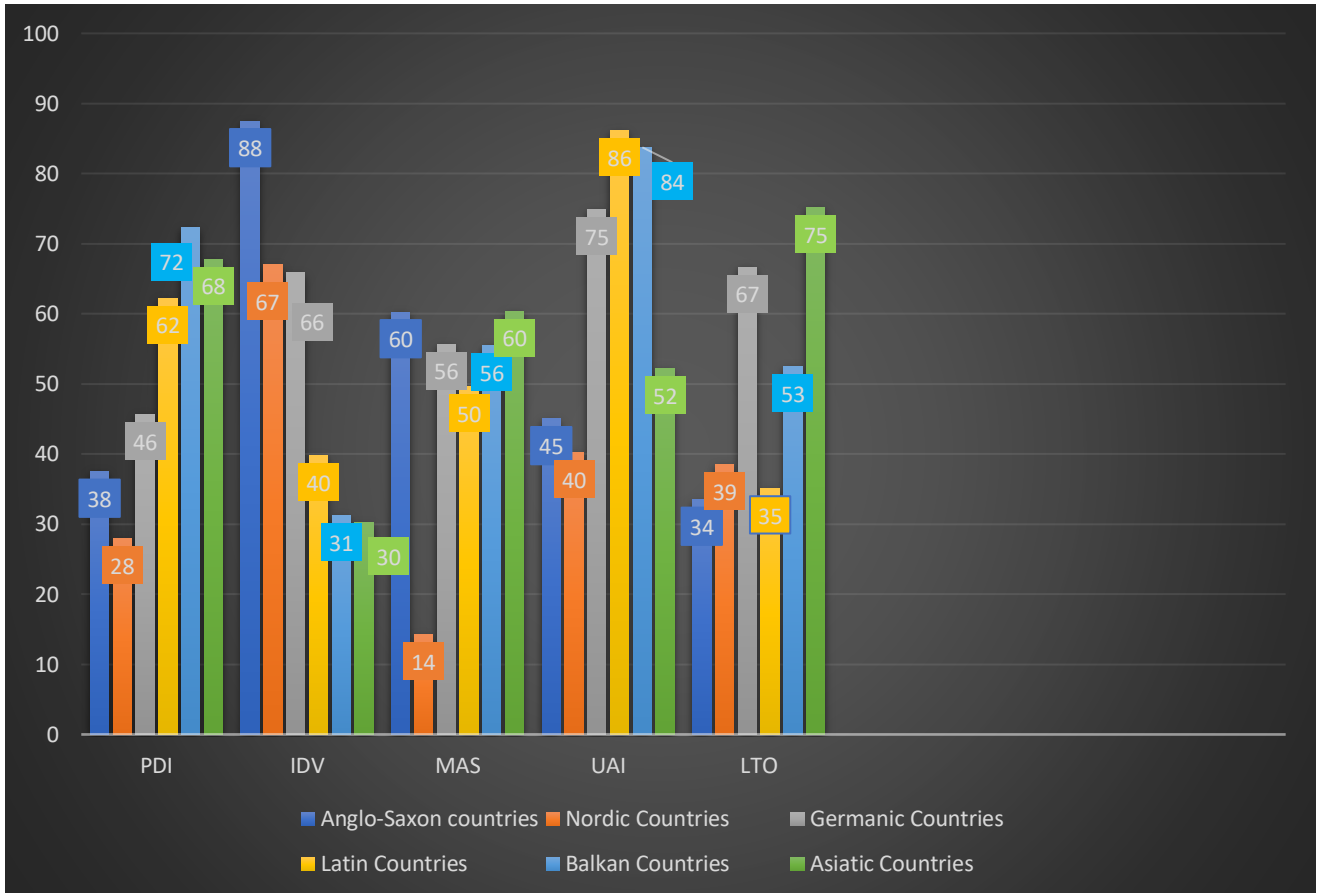
*“In Italy companies are organized in such a way there's not so much communication between you and the boss, because the boss is the boss. Meanwhile in Denmark is more horizontal, sometimes that the status is more a formality. For instance, in the company where I am working, the CEO is eating in the canteen with us and I can easily talk with him and I am a student assistant. Everybody is listening to me if I have sth to say and this impressed me a lot because in Italy this would not happen considering the same situation.” (Student 4, Italy)*

Finally, there is the category of Balkan countries. Unfortunately, for this category it was not possible to get much information, however, one of the interviewees was surprised by the ease of collaboration with people from these countries, specifically from Turkey.

*“I was very impressed in positive working with Turkish people because I thought we might have problems due to different perception of things because of the religion, but it wasn't nothing like that, probably because they were people used to work in international environment and very open minded people.” (Student 2, Italy-Spain)*

Finally, the figure below compares only the groups of states based on the dimensions of the Hofstede model.

Figure 8: Hofstede Model application 3 (Hofstede Insights, 2019)



#### 4.1.2. Analysis of Advantages and Disadvantages

This study also aims to identify the possible advantages and disadvantages that multi-ethnic collaborations can bring. It is important to emphasize that the interviewed managers belong to the Nordic, Germanic and Latin countries; while the students are mostly Latin, and only few are Balkan.

Through the experiences of the interviewees, many benefits have been identified, but in the table below, those that have been perceived by at least 3 out of 11 people will be reported.

Table 20: Advantages from an international collaboration

	Think out of box	Development of business work	foster internationalization within a company	you become smarter	you adapt easier and faster to new contexts	New skills and competencies	school/university are a bridge to become more global citizens	New languages	More awareness of weaknesses and strenght of each culture.	Become more thoughtful	Become more patient, tollerant toward the "different"
M1 (FIN)				-	-		-	-	-	-	-
M2 (S.SALV)								-		-	-
M3 (VEN)							-			-	-
M4 (GER)		-	-	-	-		-	-		-	-
M5 (FIN)			-	-	-		-	-			
S1 (TUR)			-					-	-		
S2 (ITA-SPA)		-	-		-			-	-		
S3 (ALB)		-	-		-			-			
S4 (ITA)			-		-			-		-	
S5 (ARG)		-	-						-	-	
S6 (ARG)											

As can be seen from the table, the interviewees felt enriched at least by 11 benefits which were possible by working in an international team. Among these 11 advantages, 7 stand out, having obtained a consensus from more than half of the people interviewed, such as:

- Think out of the box (100%)
- Development of business work (63,64%)
- Become smarter (72,73)%
- New skills and competences (100%)
- School/university are a bridge to become more global citizens (63,64%)

- More awareness of weaknesses and strength of each culture (63,64%)
- Become more patient, tolerant toward the " different" (63,64%)

To be able to identify disadvantages, the first two have been thought by me before people were interviewed, while the others have been identified during the interview.

Table 21: Disadvantages from an international collaboration

	Reluctant to know new culture	Increase prejudices	Hard work to understand a culture	Different Time perception may lead to arguments
<b>M1 (FIN)</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>M2 (S. SALV)</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>M3 (VEN)</b>	-	-		-
<b>M4 (GER)</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>M5 (FIN)</b>	-	-		
<b>S1 (TUR)</b>	-	-		-
<b>S2 (ITA-SPA)</b>	-	-		
<b>S3 (ALB)</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>S4 (ITA)</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>S5 (ARG)</b>	-	-		-
<b>S6 (ARG)</b>	-	-	-	-

As can be seen, the major disadvantage is called “hard work to understand a culture”. This means that is very tough to get to know a culture which is different from one's own. However, there has never been a case in which people were reluctant to learn about a new culture and way of working. Indeed, for them was just very challenging to work with international people as it required a lot of time and effort to establish a friendly environment. Furthermore, another problem encountered was the different concept of time between cultures. In the following paragraphs the topics will be more in-depth.

#### 4.1.2.1. Manager Perspective

As for managers, they are strongly aware that collaboration with people from other countries is absolutely a source of openness. This gives the possibility to grow and improve continuously, as a matter of fact, being open-minded and gain new skills and competences was a benefit approved by everyone. Below are reported some quotation that testimonies what has been claimed so far.

*“You could be able to understand people from your culture but would not be so open-minded if you do not combine other cultures as well. This is not only in regard of doing business but also building up work relationships”* (Manager 2, San Salvador)

*“People from other cultures can help you learn more in fact.”* (Manager 1, Finland)

*“[...] another example is from Canada, which is a country that has a very high level of immigration and you can find people from many countries with different cultures. This experience helped me to be open minded and it was my first experience from Latin America. I understood that we’re human and each thing we do in our way of living, is part of our culture and instead of judging, it is essential to understand the reason behind each gesture which at first might seems wired to us”* (Manager 3, Venezuela)

*“Typically, diversity is more positive than negative because it improves creativity/idea generation/expands network also towards clients.”* (Manager 5, Finland)

An advantage noted above by all managers, in addition to “development of business work”, is “foster internationalization within a company”. This is important especially when it comes to managing a multicultural team. Indeed, combining cultural diversity with team effectiveness leads to greater benefits and success, such as approaching the job process with a different mentality while boosting critical thinking. Therefore, to have a good team performance it is not enough to set clear goals, devote time to the team and

encourage the members. It is also necessary to have an empathic attitude toward diversity. In this way, it is possible to obtain excellent results also from the working point of view, as confirmed by the following testimony of the Manager 3, who, during Ramadan period, was in charge of a project in Algeria with local employees.

*“I started to do Ramadan as well to better understand them how they feel from religion point of view and also to be empathic with them. I discovered how difficult is doing Ramadan and work at the same time because you don’t drink and eat anything and it is tiring, especially when you are working in summer with temperature around 45 degrees. So, I thought that you cannot call them lazy, because is not that they don’t want to work, but the energy is low. This experience helped me to open my eyes and to truly understand the experience, the situation, the people and to prepare all the work according to the effort and energy they had.”*

Regarding disadvantages, as has been mentioned before, the main problems are due to the cultural difference that are too deep-rooted among the people who had to work together. This leads to have to invest a lot of time to learn a new language, familiarize yourself with new uses and customs, especially during work.

*“I need to invest a lot of time to understand Chinese culture in order to get deeply why they work in such a way that to us does not look optimal because they were delivering goods that doesn’t fulfil all the standards we were looking for. In order to make some modifications, I needed first to understand they’re way of working, culture and then I intervened.”* (Manager 3, Venezuela)

*“I can bring an example also in Middle Eastern cultures they are very slow decision-making people, therefore you have to be into them into understand their behavioural towards a decision. However, for me this is time consuming and a lot of pressure because work has a deadline.”* (Manager 2, San Salvador)

Another aspect closely linked to the culture of each country is communication and its interpretation. Widespread, it is known that Western culture tends to be clearer, franker and more concise, on the contrary from that of the eastern countries which have a very complex communication to decode. Therefore, as Europeans and Americans very often tend to have strong communication problems with Asian countries, being able to get to know this culture thoroughly is a pretty tough job. (Behfar, K. 2006)

As a matter of fact, this is also an experience proven by Manager 5 (see quotation page 80), who clearly confirmed how difficult it was to communicate with people belonging to Asian countries.

Regarding the issue of prejudice, all managers have argued that, when they know that they have to work with people from other nationalities, they usually have preconceptions and ideas about their backgrounds. However, they do not associate themselves to the strong prejudgments. Indeed, rooted prejudice leads to hostility, mental closure and limitation, therefore no one has been influenced by it when it came to the effective cooperation with people belonging to other cultures. As a direct consequence, this confirms their open-minded attitude.

#### 4.1.2.2. Student Perspective

The advantages perceived by all students, in addition to those shared also by managers such as "think out of the box" and "new skills and competencies", are: "Become smarter", "School/University are a bridge to become more global citizens" and "Become more patient, tolerant toward the "different"".

In fact, the group work carried out at the university gave people the opportunity to interact with a multicultural team. People had to learn how to communicate, respecting each other's cultures, and exchanging different information and thoughts on the same subject, thus giving the opportunity to have more points of view.

*"Collaboration in multicultural team has more benefits than disadvantages. You improve your soft skills, you exploit the differences, you learn how to be flexible, you can grow."* (Student 2, Spain-Italy)

*"More benefits because you build yourself because you are shaping yourself taking the positive points of other culture. I learned a lot about organization, time management because I worked a lot with Germans. You can get also knowledge because there are people who have studied in different fields and they can share their knowledge and you absorb it. I improved my public speaking, learning new languages."* (Student 5, Argentina)



*"In my opinion cultures complement each other because a lot of people give you so many ideas, contents and all together create a great synergy to be proactive professionally and personally." (Student 6, Argentina)*

As for the disadvantages, even in this case only two have been detected, the same that were also perceived by managers:

- difficulty in dealing with cultures that are totally different from their own

*"I can list two main culture clashes:*

*- religion: I used to hear 5 times a day the sound of mosque for 21 years, and then suddenly you don't because you are in a country with a different religion. Religion barrier can be a problem if you are a hard believer and not open to respect others. Moreover, being a hard believer may affect all your decision and it will be hard to do business with people from other religion if you are not respectful towards them*

*- eaten and drinking habits. In Italy they drink a lot of wine and eating a lot of pasta". (Student 1, Turkey)*

*"Indian has a completely different conception of working than me and I was very worried. We have different conception of what is urgent, and I didn't have a good impression" (Student 6, Argentina)*

- different conception of timing

The concept of time very often varies from country to country precisely because there is a profound culture behind it. First of all, countries can be considered: (Alveie, B. 2019)

- future oriented (like America);
- present oriented (like most European countries);
- past oriented (like China and India)

In fact, the United States is considered one of the countries that is more focused on the future, technological development, research (the landing of the first man on the moon), scientific discoveries. In this way it is seen as a dream destination by many people because it is perceived as a country being always one step ahead of the other which increasingly fuels the desire to live the American dream. On the other hand, a country like India that

is past-oriented, are very tied to too deep-rooted traditions which have a significant impact even in everyday life, such as giving great importance to their beliefs. Therefore, when people have different concepts of time, conflicts are inevitable. (Alveie, B. 2019)

Nevertheless, it can happen that conflicts also arise between countries that belong to the same culture, such as the Latin one for example:

*French people do everything in the end, by being very anxious and stressed. I couldn't work like that, in fact, I was taking all the time, since the beginning, to work on the project and to finish my duty and job because I couldn't handle the pressure of doing something at the end. (Student 2, Italy-Spain)*

*"French have another way of working, because they wait till the end, for this I feel more comfortable to work with Germans, who generally speaking tend to finish the job asap." (Student 6, Argentina)*

This discrepancy may be due to several factors, such as the adaptation of people of Latin origin to Nordic or Anglo-Saxon time systems. Another reason can be traced to the fact that people can be polychrome or monochrome. In fact, there are people who cannot manage the pressure because maybe they are not used to manage more than one thing at the same time. Therefore, they are used to divide their time according to the things they have to complete, categorizing them by priority and urgency. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Alveie, B. 2019)

#### 4.1.3. Managers and Students Considerations

In this section have been summarized in two tables the personal considerations that have been extrapolated from the information provided by both managers and students. This information has been processed based on their personal multicultural experiences. As can be seen from the tables below, the general considerations are very open-minded, favour multiculturalism, the exchange of knowledge and support both - personal and professional enrichment - .

The most voted are the following:

- Adaptation as a key factor
- Team – oriented
- Prejudice must be eliminated because hinder cooperation
- More global citizen oriented
- Willingness and attempt to find compromise

	Judgement based on individual not to the society the person belongs	Need to combina personal and professional life	Adapatation as key factor	Neighborhood countries are esiest to which we adapt	Team oriented
M1 (FIN)					-
M2 (S.SALV)		-			
M3 (VEN)	-	-			-
M4 (GER)	-	-			
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-		
S1 (TUR)	-	-		-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)	-	-		-	-
S3 (ALB)	-	-		-	
S4 (ITA)		-		-	-
S5 (ARG)	-	-		-	
S6 (ARG)		-		-	-

Table 22: Managers and Students consideration 1

Table 23: Managers and Students consideration 2

	Predjudices must be eliminate because hinder cooperation	More global citizens oriented	Decide your own foreign team members according to the project to achieve	Willingness and attempt to find a compromise	Language barrier must overcome
M1 (FIN)			-	-	-
M2 (S.SALV)			-	-	-
M3 (VEN)			-	-	-
M4 (GER)	-	-	-		-
M5 (FIN)	-	-	-		-
S1 (TUR)	-			-	-
S2 (ITA-SPA)			-		-
S3 (ALB)			-		-
S4 (ITA)	-	-	-	-	
S5 (ARG)			-	-	
S6 (ARG)	-		-		

The overall analysis of the respondents' personal considerations helps to answer the research question in an exhaustive manner. In fact, it can be seen that the impact of multicultural experiences is positive and profitable. Furthermore, its success is closely linked to two factors:

- accumulation of multicultural experiences
- elimination of prejudices.

This positive perception is due to the fact that today people tend to be very team-oriented. Therefore, when it comes to work with foreigners, people try to adapt themselves to the situation that they encounter, sometimes considering themselves as global citizens.

Moreover, the desire to achieve the objective set makes people more willing to try to find a compromise. Therefore, from the professional point of view, they feel enriched thanks to the exchange of knowledge and methods of working to achieve a goal.

From a personal point of view, on the other hand, enrichment is due to the exchange of culture; in fact, being aware that there are more points of view for an issue, allows managers and students to be more understanding, open-minded and flexible people. Precisely for these reasons the prejudices are always less frequent and the desire to find a compromise is always greater.

#### 4.1.4. Personal Consideration

The information obtained greatly reflected and confirmed the dimensions identified by the theoretical reference models, namely that of Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner. However, with the forecasts made in the elaborated model, some variables provided an opposite output to the one expected.

In the variable *Neighbour Countries / Culture*, greater complicity was expected between countries with similar culture, while in the case of Latin countries, this was not verified, unlike the other countries. In fact, many misunderstandings and tensions have occurred even among people belonging to the same culture, as reported in the analysis.

Regarding the variable *Number of multicultural experiences*, the hypothesized output was detected. Indeed, the more multicultural experiences are made, the more people are open to learn about new cultures and learn from them. To prove this, there are quotations from the interviewees:

*"[...] difficulties may be overcome by having many experiences in international team since you become to be more flexible and very open-minded. Being open-minded leads you to be more collaborative and proficient for the group."* (Student 2, Italy-Spain)

*"Having several experiences, help me to gain more experience in international team and make my cooperation easier."* (Student 4, Italy)

*"Since I have been working in international environment for many years, I started to adapt myself easily to different context."* (Student 6, Argentina)

As well, the output of the variable *Degree of Prejudices* has been verified, since in this case both managers and students were not influenced by any prejudice. The outputs of the other variables, *Habits* and *Language barrier*, were confirmed. Regarding the latter, many interviewees stated that a wrong communication, due to the language barrier, could compromise cooperation in an international team and the achievement of objectives.

*“especially at the beginning language can be a problem, because with time, people can improve it and it cannot be seen as a problem anymore. On the other hand, if there is not so much time, it can isolate people who aren’t so good at English for instance, so they do not interact in the group or it might lead to some misunderstanding.”* (Student 3, Albania)

As for the *Age* variable, it was not possible to evaluate it due to lack of information

All in all, the analysis of this topic means that today new variables are taken into consideration in order to obtain results that allow to understand more and more the interactions between different cultures, which can happen:

- through company agreements
- through academic agreements between universities
- through interaction between people

Concrete examples are the case of the Manager 3, who from Italy had to travel to Algeria to complete a project, or many students spend periods of study abroad in countries that are totally different from their own.

Furthermore, with regard to the research question posed at the beginning, it has been confirmed that a multicultural experience, within an international team brings, more benefits than disadvantages and also causes a personal enrichment. In fact, to the imposed question *“If the choice was yours, what would you prefer: to work in a multicultural team or with local people?”*, most of them confirmed that they would prefer to work in

an international context because of the advantages mentioned above. Some of their answers are shown below:

*“I would like to work with a mix of people, because I really believe in the power of diversity.”* (Student 3, Albania)

*“With different nationalities – makes life and work more interesting, and I believe it also improves performance and innovation on long-term”* (Manager 5, Finland)

*“working in a multi-cultural environment. After so many years of exciting relation- and friendships working in a mono-cultural set-up seems to be very boring and lacking inspiration for me.”* (Manager 4, Germany)

*“I would choose working with people from other countries because you never stop learning from them and also because I feel I have more benefits from people who are different from me. I would prefer to go out from my comfort zone because I learn more and make me wiser, even though the easiest thing to do is working with people from the same country as yours.”* (Manager 3, Venezuela)

An interesting fact found in the analysis is that the disadvantages, which were significantly less than the advantages, have been reported much more by students than by managers. In fact, only two managers were biased towards one of the four identified disadvantages.

This might be possible because managers, unlike the students, are more business-oriented, therefore, they have more interest in adapting and accepting what is different for economic reasons, which have a significant impact on the good execution of the company itself.

On the other hand, students can feel more free to express themselves also according to negative feelings and experiences as the projects that they perform have a different impact than the projects handled by managers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter will be presented the theoretical contributions that this study has brought, as well as the limitations and new ideas of analysis that can be applied to this study.

### 5.1. Theoretical Contribution

From the information obtained, it is possible to note how many aspects have been verified through the analysis and the data collected through the interviews.

In fact, it was predicted that there could be difficulties in collaboration between people who belong to distinctly different cultures, such as Asia with Europe or American people. This was evident, since they have different lifestyle, beliefs, uses and customs. Asia is a country that has a concept of power which is not shared in western countries, especially western Europe and north America. In fact, Asian people strongly believe in the organizational hierarchy system and they are rather obedient people, who want to be told what to do, as it was proven through the data collected through interviews.

Furthermore, communication is also very difficult, not only because people need to speak in a language that is not their mother tongue, but because they have methods of expression that are not clear and direct. As a matter of fact, Asians have a method of communicating that does not allow European or American people really grasp what they mean. For this reason, very often this misunderstanding leads to a greater difficulty of collaboration and understanding, since different interpretations are given to the same way of expressing oneself.

All in all, it can be said that most dimensions analyzed and studied in Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner models, have been verified through the survey.

Despite this, this analysis has led to the refutation of a dimension, namely the one which states that people, who belong to countries with a similar culture, have no difficulty in working together. In fact, this is the case of the people who come from Latin countries,



who have found particularly difficult to cooperate with people who come from Latin countries.

This could be possible since today, people tend to assimilate what they consider to be the best of all the cultures they encounter. As a matter of fact, today it is easier to study in a foreign university, to work abroad, and get to know people from all over the world. Therefore, people become comfortable with cultural diversity and want to enrich themselves by adapting to new uses and customs and applying those that fit their interests.

A further crucial aspect to consider is that advantages were greater than the disadvantages. Both students and managers have stated that not only they would prefer to work in a multicultural team, but that this is a source of important benefits.

This may be because, despite the initial difficulties in collaborating in a group, the team is effective, where the exchange of opinions and knowledge prevails and is denoted a general enrichment.

From the manager's point of view, the positive collaboration may be because, companies they work for, have managed cultural diversity by adopting a proactive approach. This means that it may happen that very often the manager has the decisive role of mitigating any kind of conflict by indicating general rules for everyone.

As for the students, they are interested in learning and absorbing as much knowledge as possible. Therefore, they see the possibility of working in a multicultural team as an opportunity to get involved and constantly improve themselves.

## 5.2. Managerial Implications

The objective of this script is to provide an answer to the following query: *“What impact does the multicultural experience have on manager and students through collaboration in an international team?”*.

The data collected are not sufficient to provide a good accuracy from a statistical point of view due to the limited amount of observations gathered.

This does not mean that the outcome of the research is not valuable or useful, but that it cannot be considered as the average behaviour of all population, due to the fact that is not possible to standardize the data collected.

On the other hand, it is possible to have a deep look on the relevant impact of the multicultural experience in nowadays life of these specific people.

Before expressing more in deep my personal assessments, I would like to point out an important aspect: people are living in a time period where technology affected, is affecting and will affect even more their lives.

People are more connected to each other, despite their distance in real time, cutting - in this way - radically “time costs” and lowering all geographical barriers. (World development report, 2009)

This phenomenon has been perceived in first place by most companies as an opportunity to enter into a larger market that offers at the same time - on one side more opportunities and profit margins, and on the other it makes you face more risks and higher competition. Therefore, from the managerial point of view, it is important to know that companies are demanding employees with critical thinking and open-minded soft skills, in particular those who have to cover roles concerning dealing with the external environment, for instance with customers, suppliers, partners and so on.

Thinking critically most of the time relates to thinking out of the box because people that have this skill are able to view the topic from different perspectives, they are able to see several alternative solutions or means to reach their goals.

On the other hand, being a good manager that works at international level means being opened to other different cultures that are used to conclude agreements in different ways, although both - manager's company and the foreign company - are interested in reaching the same contract.

From the interviews of the managers it is possible to observe how their multicultural experience affected their personality and their way in doing business.

The first insight that comes out is that they are more goal-focused and problem-solving oriented. In fact, the more managers deal with international people the more they are focused at finding a good agreement between the two. In addition, the more they are working within a multicultural context, the more competences, skills and knowledge they are gaining.

I strongly believe that the positive impact perceived by the managers can be addressed to students as well, since they have the opportunity to gain these soft skills before starting their job, instead using these skills for the gaining a more rewarded job position.

Students interviewers were more interested in expressing how they personality has been shaped after their multicultural experience. Almost all of them stated that this experience helped them in being more tolerant toward what is perceived as "different or foreign".

They tend to be more thoughtful and less impulsive. This new attitude is a strongly positive impact that multicultural experience had on them as it fosters clear communication and understanding among people, reducing or even eliminating (most of time) conflicts and fight. As a matter of fact, people tend to be more curious in grasping the reasons why someone else may perceive my topic in different way instead of judging other ideas.

Another relevant aspect that is important to highlight is that, at the beginning people tend to have a better connection, thus to adapt easier to persons that are from similar culture, for instant and Italian guy may understand and integrate very fast to a Spanish culture.

While I was interviewing both managers and students, I noticed that the more people were inside a multicultural context the less they tend to be linked to the assumption mentioned above.

This behaviour is due to the fact that after a while, people start to think and to act differently, they become more open-minded, they know how to behave with people coming from other cultures, because they listen more, and they pay more attention to the culture of the other.

In conclusion I can say that multicultural experience, despite the challenges that each person has to overcome, is a resourceful way for reaching efficiency in business and improving the society from a social point of view, as it fosters good and clear communication among people, lowering or reducing conflict and prejudice.

### 5.3. Limitation of the study

Although this analysis has provided an answer to the research question and its three objectives, there are limitations.

First of all, choosing to give a qualitative answer, through the information obtained through the interviews, obviously does not make the study objective but subjective, since each interpretation varies according to the subject. Furthermore, initially it was intended to carry out only direct interviews, using media such as Skype or in person. This was not always respected because the interviewees, due to lack of time, preferred to reply in writing to the questions I had provided.

Precisely because the type of interview used was semi-structured, the lack of an in-person interview did not give the chance to grasp more information through new questions.

A further limitation may be due to the fact that face-to-face interviews could not put the interviewees at ease. As a result, they could feel less free to express themselves on some sensitive subjects.

#### 5.4. Way forwards

Despite the limitations identified above, this study can boost the curiosity to analyse the topic more in-depth, adopting a quantitative rather than a qualitative analysis.

In fact, the number of observations could be expanded by administering a questionnaire to verify the answers obtained using a different method and, consequently, reporting any similarities and differences that may be encountered. In addition, the quality of the answers could also be improved, since, knowing the name of the people, will no longer be useful as the questionnaire will be filled in anonymously.

Another important and interesting topic that can be object of analysis, would be to study specifically the Latin countries which seem to have more difficulty to relate with people from other cultures, such as Nordic countries, Anglo-Saxons and so on.

Last but not least, since in this analysis it was reported that all interviewees found great problems in collaborating with Asian countries, it could be interesting to study the situation from another point of view. It could be examined specifically what relationship Asian people have with the rest of the people belonging to other cultures. By doing so, it could be seen whether the collaboration turns out to be quite tough on both sides or if it turns out to be hostile only towards to Asian countries, but not vice versa.

## 6. APPENDIX

In this section will be provided all the interviews done with Managers and Students

### 6.1. Managers

#### MANAGER 1

Nationality: Finland

*How long has you been working with people with different backgrounds?*

I have been working for seven years in the market with different backgrounds mostly coming from Europe.

*Do you think it was beneficial working with people from different parts of Europe?*

Working with these people was beneficial for developing the work of the company. It helped for building the company internationally oriented.

*What about your personal point of view?*

Interacting with people from Germany and Netherlands gave me satisfaction because of their agreement of my design project. Although there were people who enforced the idea of modifying the little details in the design, so that the same solution feeds different sectors.

*How was your collaboration with finish people?*

There were especially two individuals who agreed with our idea of the trash free environment, one of them now works for us now. Our models and their ideas work in such a way that help us improve our business, and of course they were included on every project that we developed. Another key part in our collaboration was the language of course it is easy to express and explain your ideas because of the rich vocabulary.

*What do you think about timing are the people you work with punctual?*

There have been small cases but nothing important to mention. We had a different problem although that has nothing to do with timing but is worth mentioning we were complaining to a Chinese company about an order: the packages had an exhaust gas kind of smell, but they thought otherwise. And this happened twice from two Chinese suppliers.

*How did you deal with the supply from China?*

In the first case they sampled the packages that were coming, and we complained, and we paid a few hundred dollars for those, those are the first ones they manufactured... so we could see all the measures and all the details are right there. Then we just said that we cannot accept these items because they smell really bad, then we found out that they hadn't any certification for their product. Probably they were dealers buying from somewhere else and selling their product as their own... It was easy just to say no to their product.

In the second time we had an ongoing business collaboration with them; we ordered a big bunch of those packages because at least we didn't have any problem with the smelly ones. But it was quite obvious (the smell), we had our agent back in Finland, actually their agent who we had been working with. We went to the harbor to see these packages, and those smelled really bad. The agent said that he was going to make a reclamation to the company. And from that point we didn't order any supplies from them anymore.

*With whom are you working now?*

We are still ordering supplies from another company in China. We stopped working with the previous ones because we had an offer from another one who could provide recycled material for us. This is how we did overcome the problem of the smell.

*Were you sceptic toward foreign suppliers at first?*

I am against all kinds of prejudices, but in my experience, the people are pretty much the same everywhere. We should see people not by their nationality because they are persons who have personality. Personally, I would meet them as individuals not as representatives of one culture.

*How many people have you been working and whom of them was easy to work with?*

There were many, but what I remember were: Americans, British, Belgians, Italian, Austrians, Germans, Dutch, and Chinese etc. However, the most easily to work with were people from Netherlands, very well educated and open-minded. Strangely, there was a case with DHL in Germany, which wanted to convey a controlled, thorough examination on our packages because our packages were too slippery for their transportation machines. In addition, they wanted a different payment from the previous agreement with us. This was a huge problem for us, but there was a German trainee working with us, who wrote a letter to the high-ranking officer in DHL and then we were a go.

*Your approach towards other countries is always informal, or is it just with neighbouring countries?*

As a tradition, we do not have this kind of approach, this is different in Germany. Our society does not have a hierarchy, and this is different from other countries. There was a place where everybody has the same salary. Also, I remember we were operating with another company last year, which was more like a design company.

*Last year you were testing the American market, is the operation still ongoing?*

Because I am not in the operations anymore, I am not up to date with everything what is going on... but they are working on it.

*With whom you would like to work with and why?*

It is not important with whom you work with nowadays you should be caring if there is to gain something from it. People from other cultures can help you learn more in fact. You could rely on neighbouring countries if your budget is low.

*Do you keep your professional life away from your personal life or you combine them?*

Absolutely combined. It is difficult to separate work from your free time, although your free time is important but also work is important, I am in the middle of my work, so I combine free time with work.



## MANAGER 2

Nationality: San Salvador

*What is your work and position?*

I am an expert manager for 13 months ago.

*Have you ever worked in an international team?*

I have previous experience as an intern in an international team.

*Where are you from?*

I am from Salvador, when I finished my high school I went to Taiwan where I finished my international thesis. Since then I wanted to learn more about international cultures and this is why I am here and I need to learn more about these western experiences.

*Therefore, you have experience working with different cultures as well as your own!?*

Now that I am an expert manager, I tend to make more decisions and some of them may include not only my teammates but also people from other countries. I can bring an example: in Middle Eastern cultures they are very slow decision-making people, therefore you have to be into them to understand their behavioural towards a decision. However, for me, this is time consuming and a lot of pressure because work has a deadline. Different is the cooperation with people in Asia: they are very fast decision-making people because they have a 24-hour workday. For them it is the only way to be accepted and would be more likely to have a business with them. So in my previous experience you need to adapt to these situations in order to succeed.

*What is harder and beneficial in both terms professional and personal?*

People from the same cultures could be able to understand easier (talking about his country) but would not be the case of being so open-minded if you combine other cultures. This is not only in regard of doing business but also building up work relationships.

*Have you ever had any prejudice towards other cultural background stereotypes?*

Usually in the beginning of a work relationship, this is normal, but as soon as you start knowing their personality and professionalism toward the work, you begin to be more open-minded.

*How many nationalities have you been working with?*

Italy and Spain mostly, the latter because my company is originated from there. We have day-to-day meeting with people from these countries. We also have collaborations with other countries as well as Finland, Sweden, Poland, Peru and other countries from South America.

*Who were the most difficult to work with?*

I would mention here the people from Mediterranean countries, including here Spain, Italy, and South American countries. Also these are the countries that I work more at the beginning, with so the difficulty is understandable.

But the hardest to work with is middle east. We were opening a business market there and it was hard to negotiate with people from these countries. One part of the difficulty was the masculinity culture that they have in everything. We had a project that included feminine gender and who were not welcome in the meeting room.

*According to your experience, would you prefer to work with people from your cultural background or from different background?*

I would prefer the western countries more. They have bright ideas, more organized and the difference in cultural background it does not matter as long as the business is good.

*Personally speaking working internationally leads to more advantages or disadvantages?*

Definitely it is better working internationally that is necessary if you want to grow. This is not only from my perspective point of view, but also professionally, because the world is changing, and an international company must be adaptive to its environment in order to succeed.

*What about the Scandinavian people?*

At the beginning I thought of them being rigid and precise, as we were doing business this thought changed because they worked less time and were more open-minded than most of the other countries. They were more straightforward in business meetings but in an informal kind of way.

*Has this work changed you personally?*

It helped me to improve my professional career as well as my personality, but still I have a lot to learn even from a personal point of view. In my experience in this line of work, you have to be an extrovert always getting in the middle of the discussion. As a student, we had a project that we were working with and I remember this because even though I did not lead the project at the end of the day what mattered was the teamwork. In other terms even though you are a small puzzle in a whole picture you should make yourself part of it in order to make it whole.

*Have you worked with somebody who was different from you?*

Even though they are different, it is my job to make them feel part of the puzzle. At the end of the day, your team fails or succeed for that matter not just one person, so it is paramount to put them on daily program. And this has nothing to do with cultural background as more in a personal background.

MANAGER 3

Nationality: Venezuela

*Have you had any prejudice towards a country/culture?*

I have been also experiencing different religion. For instance, I oversaw a project between Italy and Algeria and I was in the middle of Sahara working with Algerian, who are Muslim, it was Ramadan period. Before going there, I knew about some rumours about them saying that people during Ramadan are too lazy or tired when it comes to work. So, once I got there, I started to do Ramadan as well to better understand them how they feel from religion point of view and also to be empathic with them. I came up how difficult is doing Ramadan and work at the same time because you don't drink and eat anything and

it is tiring, especially when you are working in summer with temperature around 45 degrees. So, I thought that you cannot call them lazy, because is not that they don't want to work, but the energy is low. This experience helped me to open my eyes and to truly understand the experience, situation, people and to prepare all the work according to the effort and energy they had.

Another example is from Canada, which is a country that has a very high level of immigration and you can find people from many countries and cultures. This experience helped me to be open minded. It was my first experience from Latin America. I understood that we're human and each thing we do in our way of living, is part of our culture and instead of judging, it is essential to understand the reason behind each gesture which at first might seems wired to us. (good attitude)

*Have you ever adapted yourself to people who has different perception of things such as timing and power?*

It is not the same working in China, Italy or Latin America. In China, if you asked an operator to do something they will do immediately, they will not argue with you and do not even think about to say something to disagree with you. This is the same in Eastern Europe

If you go to Latin America, it will be a mix, there will be followers and people who will say you that if they disagree and they will not do it. Again, according to their culture people have the opportunity to say if they agree or not because the concept of power is differently perceived.

When it comes to work in project, I know that I need to schedule it differently according to who I am working with. For instance, when it comes to German people, I know that, when it comes to timing, they are very strict and time oriented. Thus, I also put on my schedule a possible delay because if I modify my project, it will take more time to end it. While, if I work with Italians, everything is flexible. Flexibility sometimes can be good and other time harmful. Being flexible give you the possibility to skip some stuffs that you wanted at the beginning of a project. Again, what is good? I do not know, everything is subjective, and everything vary according to the situation, what is important is to be prepared to this because it is all a matter of cultures. Being prepared, having knowledge

and experience on working with different culture help you to plan it according to the country you will work or with people you will work the most.

All Europe (almost every country), Almost all the countries in Latin America, where even though the culture is pretty the same, actually there are some minor difference, especially if you compare a person from peru with a person from Colombia; Africa; Asia.

*Which would you consider the hardest part of cooperating at international level?*

The hardest part is understanding the culture, because everything goes around it. But according to the fact that I am from Latin America, thus considering my culture, working with italians, Spanish is not so hard cause we are flexible, positive like them (probably because we have sunshine most of the time).

It was hard for me to adapt to northern European countries and Germans' way of structure the work, otherwise, they would be lost being more flexible.

China: I need to invest a lot of time to understand their culture in order to get deeply why they work in such a way that to us does not look optimal because they were delivering goods that does not fulfil all the standards we were looking for. In order to make some modifications, I needed first to understand they're way of working, culture and then I intervened.

Everything has its good side and bad side. For instance, when it comes to say to a Chinese that is important to be safety, you just need to say it once, while in South America you have to say it every day in order to ensure that people got the message.

In Africa, for instance, safety is a concept totally different from Europe. In fact, they do dangerous things every day, working with dangerous material without the right safety measures, while in Europe, especially western Europe, this is something not acceptable. Different concept of safety because of different culture and knowledge.

The difference of West Europe and East Europe: East Europe has an influence still because of communism and still are affected in somehow in some way of behaving from this recent period of history. Still, is good to mention that there are lot of people who are not affected at all, even though they are from this part of Europe, because they have been living in different place and get to know different culture, who has made them more flexible and less structured.

Working with people coming from different cultures I learned a lot and I feel grown a lot from personal and professional point of view. You start to learn things you never will had the opportunity, the way how to see life and understand that everything we have, it is not given for granted and you should appreciate what you have. I come from Venezuela which is facing a very huge problem and crisis, but if I compare Venezuela with Nord Africa, such as Congo, Algeria even Morocco, you can see even more difficulties. So, I figure out how blessed I am not have been born in places which are even more dangerous or difficult than Venezuela. When you meet people coming from countries from developed countries, you can speak with them and make them realize how lucky they are. Every time, I am in a factory and people are complaining about their salary, because they have the desire to have more, they don't think for a second that if they compared it locally, they are having such a good salary.

From my personal point of view, I am grateful because I have water, electricity, a house, job and these things are not given for granted because there are countries where these things are not given for granted. From my professional point of view, it helped me to be more structured and easier worker with people from different countries, moreover I learned also different languages.

*Which are the difficulties that you have experience or think that may arise from MC collaboration?*

Languages can be difficult, I need also to learn different language due to work; for instance, now I need to learn very very fast French. Also Economy is very tricky. It is important to know the way how the economy is driven in the country because depending on the economy, you will have different inflation rate, especially when you are working on global project. Moreover, working with women is different than working with man.

From my personal point of view I feel myself more easy-going, now the way how I approach to people and talk with them changed a lot. I can move easily in different countries. Professionally speaking, you are more committed to the organization, take better strategies and tend to be more structured because I know a lot of different nations and cultures. I can work with people from anywhere, I do not have any specific preferences. It will be easier to work with someone from Venezuela, but still I have a lot to learn and if I need to choose, I would choose working with people from other countries

cause you never stop to learn from them and also because I feel I have more benefits from people who are different from me. I would prefer to go out from my comfort zone because I learn more and this makes me wiser, even though the easiest thing to do is working with people from the same country as yours.

The following two interviews are not done through videocall or face to face.

#### MANAGER 4

Nationality: Germany

*Please, introduce yourself. Who are you, where are you working.*  
My name is Manager 4, I am working in Brussels area as VP Operations for a Flavour and Perfum house responsible for the EMEA region.

*Have you ever worked in an international team?* Yes, for more than 20 years

*Have you ever been influenced by clichés or prejudices when you had to collaborate with foreign people? For example, when you knew that you have to collaborate with latin people it is thought that they are very lazy and not punctual.*  
It is very difficult to avoid these mindtraps – but I have successfully managed to remind myself of those and then overcoming. In any case whenever you have established a personal contact and relationship the nationality, race, gender ... becomes secondary to me.

*In your experience, does working with people of different nationalities lead to more benefits or disadvantages? What and why? Can you give an example of that?* The diversity of thought and approach into i.e. problem solving in a mixed team has always been amazing me.

*If you said more benefits, do you think that in a multicultural collaboration may arise also some disadvantages? Which? How can they be overcome, if it is possible? In a*

“normed” behaviour and thinking pattern within one culture you can progress much faster as you do not need to “lay the ground” for what you believe is the right approach, speed, vocabulary, rituals etc. They can be overcome by laying out the ground rules within that multicultural team. To highlight clear “no go”s for each team member. But this also applies if you want to create a winning team composed of only one culture set. Active listening at any time and watching out for verbal and non-verbal signs that one or more team members are not comfortable with something.

*Can you list with how many nationalities had you work with?* All European countries, US, Canada. Mexico, Brazil, Peru, South-Africa, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine ... might have forgotten some.

*With whom was it easier to work? Why? Can you give any examples?*

Obviously as closer to my own culture the easier it is (German, Austrian, Swiss, French...)

but I also find it very easy to work with Latin American cultures (Brazil, Mexico). Why, for the first due to similarity. For the second because of a human centered behaviour but still being professional, hard working

*With whom was the harder to work? Why? Can you give any examples?*

Asian cultures (China, India...) are more difficult for me to work with as it is very difficult to read from a person you do not (yet) know that well what he/she really wants to express or thinks. Politeness, hierarchical thinking is strongly anchored in how and what to express.

*Have you ever had difficulty adapting to some features that belong to other cultures?*

Any time I am working with people from other cultures it is a new adventure and challenge to learn & accept quickly any features belonging to this culture. I can't really think of a feature that I did not get used to or could not cope with.

*Which features, belonging to other cultures, was easier for you to adapt to?*

Difficult to say, can't remember



During the cooperation, how did your approach evolve into an international team? What did you change about yourself and why? In my very first exposures to other cultures I was more projecting and trying to impose my set of behavioural patterns. Over time I have learned to observe and to understand – and to take the best of each of the cultures.

*Do you believe that professional experiences have also influenced your personality? Why? Can you tell me an example?* Working with many hundred of people from a very diverse background (and nationality is only one expression of diversity) has obviously broadened my thinking. I am looking with a much wider angle into any topics I deal with as I have truly understood that there are far more than just one way to do things.

*Think of some hobbies you have, such as swimming, dancing, walking, and so on. Do you think that thanks to the collaboration with foreign people it has led you to develop or strengthen qualities such as self-confidence, concentration, gratings, organization, etc. which are also important for personal life, not just professional ones?* I love swimming – but I don't not think that my international contacts have done any difference in this.

*If the choice is yours, would you prefer to work with people of your own nationality or with people of different nationalities? Why?* A very clear: working in a multi-cultural environment. After so many years of exciting relation- and friendships working in a mono-cultural set-up seems to be very boring and lacking inspiration for me.

## MANAGER 5

Nationality: Finland

*Please, introduce yourself. Who are you, where are you working.*

Manager 5, I work at Accenture Consulting as Talent & Organizations Nordics lead within Communications, media and high-tech industry

*Have you ever worked in an international team?*

Yes, whole my career pretty much. Of course sometimes teams have been also local.

*Have you ever been influenced by clichés or prejudices when you had to collaborate with foreign people? For example, when you knew that you have to collaborate with latin people it is thought that they are very lazy and not punctual.*

Yes, I think we all are cognitively biased based on our previous experience, knowledge and interaction. Who says otherwise lies ☺ The longer I have collaborated with people from other cultures the biases typically decrease and/or one learns to accept the differences in ways of working.

*In your experience, does working with people of different nationalities lead to more benefits or disadvantages? What and why? Can you give an example of that?*

Typically, diversity is more positive than negative because it improves creativity/idea generation/expands network also towards clients. Of course, it doesn't mean it is easy – sometimes can be time consuming to get common understanding/understand each other. This has happened to me in cross-cultural project and proposal teams etc.

*If you said more benefits, do you think that in a multicultural collaboration may arise also some disadvantages? Which? How can they be overcome, if it is possible? See above, I think best way to overcome is to take an open mindset and try to really listen and understand where the other person is coming from (origin, values, motivators, etc.) and accept we are different*

*Can you list with how many nationalities had you work with? Approx. 15-20*

*With whom was it easier to work? Why? Can you give any examples?* Typically, with the ones who are closest to your own culture (ways of working) like Nordics. I have worked with Nordics colleagues in project work and sales

*With whom was the harder to work? Why? Can you give any examples?* Probably with Asians considering the differences are bigger (e.g. when Finnish say something we typically mean it and can be quite direct, Asians may say something to please you or for other reasons like saving the face etc.)

*Have you ever had difficulty adapting to some features that belong to other cultures?*

Yes, e.g. the one I share with you in point 8

*Which features, belonging to other cultures, was easier for you to adapt to? For example, I like the positivity in Americans and the social dimension/community building in India*

*During the cooperation, how did your approach evolve into an international team?*

*What did you change about yourself and why?* The international teams are built in our company based on the skills per role per demand, it is part of our company culture. I think the biggest personal change relates to becoming more accepting to differences of people/cultures, focusing more on understanding than jumping to quick conclusions + patience. Why: makes the collaboration and own life easier – we cannot expect others to change if we don't do it.

*Do you believe that professional experiences have also influenced your personality?*

*Why? Can you tell me an example?* Not sure if they have changed personality that is quite stable construct, but definitely some aspects and mindset like openness and confidence have increased, and maybe I have needed to be more extrovert too.

*Think of some hobbies you have, such as swimming, dancing, walking, and so on. Do you think that thanks to the collaboration with foreign people it has led you to develop or strengthen qualities such as self-confidence, concentration, gratings, organization, etc. which are also important for personal life, not just professional ones?* I think it has helped to take things more relaxed and accept/appreciate the differences also within the Finnish people, also it has improved communication skills

*If the choice is yours, would you prefer to work with people of your own nationality or with people of different nationalities? Why?* With different nationalities – makes life and work more interesting, and I believe it also improves performance and innovation on long-term

## 6.2. Students

### STUDENT 1

Nationality: Turkey

*Do you have any prejudices against people? And what do you think about having prejudices?*

I think that working with people coming from different countries give you the possibility to have different way of thinking, they help to think and look out of the box.

On the other side people from the same country, in a short period tend to become one, thus if there is someone who is from another country and think differently, the majority will defend his opinion because the culture has affected their way of thinking regarding a specific issue.

Also religion is a crush among people. If there is a dinner between Jewish, Muslim and Christian there are some differences that will have an impact on the dinner itself, hence, on the atmosphere of the night. (alcohol yes or no, pork yes or no...etc)

Working with people coming from different countries should be contextualized. For instance, according to my experience, if you are working on a project for an Italian market, but the team is made up of a lot of people coming from different nations except Italy, then you will have 10 different ideas, but if they are not feasible in Italy, they will cause a problem. Therefore, I would prefer a multicultural team where some people are from the country where the project is thought to be, because this will be more helpful.

Working in an international environment gave me the benefit of understanding different cultures: French, Italian, Arabic, German, Danish, swiss, Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Iceland.

Turkey culture is developing, some situations are changing such as the concept of work. Even though it is a Mediterranean country/culture, the way of working seems to be more like the one that is present in Germany: very efficient, on time and structured.

When I came to Italy, I was always on time, very organized and structured. Once I was working with a group of French, Italian, Turkish and German people. We had many conflicts especially about timing because Italians were very late and wanted to chill and relax. This attitude makes German people and also me very crazy cause we could not

understand this approach to work. Beside timing, also the quality of the work is different, when it comes to analyse each part of the group done by each member, you could see how different they were in terms of contents and quality.

In addition, when it comes to almost deadline, Italians start to be very anxious, hard-worker and very stressed because they know they have to deliver the project. This is not a healthy way to work and perform. While Germans do not rush at the end. They are people who prefer to work and schedule their time and work in order to do the work good and smooth, without anxiety or too much stress.

*What was different from your culture and you could adapt to it easily?*

The language can be definitely perceived as a barrier: in Italy they do not speak very well English, most of the time everyone prefers to speak in Italian, but there's a pro for me because I could learn Italian, since I need to adapt myself. The same didn't happen in Germany cause Germans speak very well English.

Religion may also be considered somehow a barrier: I was used to hear 5 time a day the sound of mosque for 21 years, and then suddenly I don't hear it because I was living in a country where the dominant religion was not the Muslim one.

Food and drinking habits may be an obstacle that you have to adapt: in Italy they drink a lot of wine and eat a lot of pasta. Also, hanging out is very different, for instance in Germany parties starts at 7 and finished in 12, while in Italy you are preparing to go out at 12. So timing is different, and this affect also the way of working because at 6 p.m. it was late for someone of here for others and so on.

*What advantages can bring multicultural collaboration?*

Thinking different, ideas, knowledge. -> Asian don't know something about in Europe and vice versa. You can self-develop yourself because people will try to understand and adapt themselves to what was conceived as different. Another advantage is the fact that it brings some empathy, which is an important skill. Finally, you learn a lot of things and listen more people.

*What disadvantages can bring multicultural collaboration?*

You may face the lack of being understood because of the common language English which is not the mother tongue of everybody and not everyone has a good level of it.

Also, religion barrier can be a problem if you are a hard believer and not open to respect others. Moreover, being a hard believer may affect all your decisions and it will be hard to do business with people from other religion if you are not respectful towards them. Even though choosing to work with people from my country or foreigner will change according to the job and environment, most of the case I prefer to work with people from other countries because of their benefits. It will help me to grow, to get more socialize and to never stop learning.

*Do you feel that your personality has been somehow affected and changed?*

I am more open minded because in Turkey LGBT friends and they are closer as mentality. I started to travel a lot and make so many friends, I enlarge also my network. I started to be much more patient and calmer. Before I was more direct and impulsive, now I think more before talking cause I need to understand that there is a person in front of me who is different. For me it is easier to adapt to German, Italians and Spanish culture; It is hard to adapt to Asian culture because I spend much more time to get to know their work. Moreover, they are very shy, they do not express themselves, they take time to take decision, they think a lot about taking time, while I would like to save time.

STUDENT 2 LOPEZ

Nationality: Italy and Spain

*Do you have any prejudices against people? And what do you think about having prejudices?*

French people are seen by Italian and Spanish people as people that they think they do everything better than the others, they do not want to share too much or to be part of their group. When I got to work with them, I did not feel that they were avoiding others because they feel superior, but because if they don't understand your point of view, they just do what they know to do and don't try to get to know it, but it wasn't in a negative way. It is

just a way of doing and working. I have been working with French, Indian, Czech republic, Netherlands, South America, Turkey people

*Which was the hardest culture to adapt to?*

Indian people work very seriously (which is good), but there was a problem when it comes to perform the work that we did. I thought that everybody understood the work to do at the same way as mine, but Indians misunderstood it due to communication problems and this affected our result and project at the end which wasn't so good to be perfect. We work also differently, while we were more creative, the Indians were more scientific and rigid, they were doing what it was thought by them to be done. When they work, they really focused on that thing, losing the connection with the rest.

*How was your relationship with the other culture that you have been working with?*

With people of south America and south Europe, it is very good the communication part, but they are more relaxed, less detailed and serious.

Netherlands and German people are similar, very direct, and this is something that I am not used at. Cech republic people sometimes they seem not to be very open to share, not clear, very confusing

I highlight the fact that people have different concept of perceiving time: French people do everything in the end, by being very anxious and stressed. I couldn't work like that, in fact I was taking all the time since the beginning to work on the project and to finish my duty and job because I couldn't handle the pressure of doing something at the end. I was very impressed in positive working with Turkish people because I thought we might have problems due to different perception of things because of the religion, but it wasn't nothing like that, probably because they were people used to work in international environment and very open minded people.

*Do you believe that working in a MC brings more benefits or disadvantages?*

Collaboration in MC has more benefits than disadvantages. You improve your soft skills, exploit the differences learn how to be flexible and grow. I will choose with people coming from my similar culture if I have to do a project that requires less time to complete

it, in order to avoid problems such as misunderstanding because of communication or culture, otherwise I will prefer people coming from other countries.

One disadvantage that I perceived a lot was time perception which is different according to the culture (Italian and Spanish control step by step), French people work alone and then put everything together. But these difficulties may be overcome by having many experiences in international team since you become to be more flexible and very open-minded. Being open-minded leads you to be more collaborative and proficient for the group.

*Do you think that this experience brought value to your personality?*

I feel I have improved to be less impulsive, not to rush, but I am more thoughtful. In fact, rushing doesn't leave you to have a good idea of the situation, I would like to understand deeply and then figure out a compromise.

### STUDENT 3

Nationality: Albania

*Have you been always lived in Albania?*

During the last years I have been living in different countries such as Italy, Lisbon, Greece and Louisiana and during these experiences I have been collaborating with different countries.

*What do you think about having prejudices? Do you have any of them?*

I wasn't scared to collaborate with other people, even though I thought it was going to be very challenging at the very beginning. Having different mindset is sometimes positive because it brings new ideas, but also it might be negative since people have different personalities, hence is very hard to convince someone about sth that you think differently.



*According your experiences what advantages do you think there are while working in a MD environment?*

Being surrounded by people with different ideas, make you think out of the box. For instance, situation or things that you were believing and are conceived normal or real, might be different for someone else born and raised in some place different, hence having a different background. In fact, your personality is pretty much influenced by the place where you are born and raise, therefore facing other international people is interacting and making you more open minded.

*Which culture did you cooperate with?*

I have been worked with Italians, Turkey, Greece, Croatian, American, Germans, Indians.

*Which was the hardest culture to work with?*

India: because they made small groups within a big group. They were acting in a isolating thing, they prefer to work with people who were closer to their culture because they think it was easier and by doing so, they just ignored the rest.

*Which was, based on your experience the easiest country to work with?*

America: they're open to share ideas, to discuss and they have the mindset that even though you don't like the idea of someone, you have to take it into account and to consider that opinion either way, even though you might think that it is not a valid idea.

*Did you adapt yourself to something that belongs to other cultures?*

In group project, I used to work 100% all together, I never split the work. While, in Portugal they split it and they just gather together in order to bring the results, without working actually together. I had to adapt to that. I would like to work with a mix of people, because I really believe in the power of diversity.

*Did the MC environment improve your personality? If so can you share your experience with me?*

I have been improving communication skills, I am more able to try to transmit my ideas to other people, I have learned to be a good listener, I have learned to be a better time

management since I have been to schedule myself according also to other's schedule, in order to be punctual and to carry on projects.

*Which are the disadvantages that you face while you were in a MC environment?*

According to my personal experience one barrier that I faced was the language especially at the beginning because with time, people can improve it and it can not be seen as a problem anymore. On the other hand, if there is not so much time, it can isolate people who aren't so good at English for instance, so they do not interact in the group or it might lead to some misunderstanding.

Also Body language is something that is very used in Italy, not so much in America and not at all in Lisbon.

There is also a different perception of role power: in Europe it seems that they want to equally make the decisions even though there is a slight difference in the position, such as, who is the leader and who is not. In America, the leader feels to have more responsibilities and he acts as he is truly taking the lead of the project and feel that is the person you can refer to. For people in India it seems they really respect the fact that someone should take lead and other should follow what the leader is asking and saying.

*Do you think that you gain more benefits from being in a MC environment or that you had to come up with many issues?*

I definitely felt more benefits, it is possible because you had more experiences, and you have also an attitude that you want to succeed, to grow, to never stop learning and to grasp every opportunity. This is something that I learned from people from other countries. Also being a "good dreamers", which means that it is not possible to achieve some goals if you really work hard for them.

STUDENT 4

Nationality: Italy.

*With which culture did you have the chance to co-work?*

I co-worked with people from Japan, Australia, Danish (mostly). Danish People are very friendly, they don't want to have just colleagues but also friends, thus was not so shocking to me. You share experience, know-how and ideas.

*What do you think about having prejudices, do you have any?*

I thought German people are quite distant and not friendly people, but it turns out to be the other way around, which means now we're friends and one of them is my flatmate. I thought also that Germans stay with Germans, but it wasn't like that.

*Do you think there are more benefits or disadvantages while you are working in an international environment?*

I don't think there's a difference if you work with people coming from my country or from others. I think it is more a matter of personality of people rather than nationality.

*Did you face any challenges to adapt in some cultures?*

In Italy companies are organized in such a way there's not so much communication between you and the boss, because the boss is the boss. Meanwhile in Denmark is more horizontal, sometimes that the status is more a formality. For instance, in the company where I am working, the CEO is eating in the canteen with us and I can easily talk with him and I am a student assistant. Everybody is listening to me if I have something to say and this impressed me a lot because in Italy this would not happen considering the same situation. It can be a benefit if you work in a horizontal way. At the beginning I was shy and talking in a formal way because I didn't expect such a working experience where I could talk with people who have such important responsibilities. It took me time to adapt to it because it was shocking and something unexpected which doesn't belong before to my mindset.

*Was for easy to adapt in the new context?*

I worked in a friendly environment, my colleagues are not only my colleagues and nothing more, they can be friends, people to hang out with, to stay together etc we can help each other.

*Which were the disadvantages that you had to deal with?*

Language barrier.

*What are your personal considerations about your experience in MC environment?*

Japanese people have been integrated so far.

From my personal point of view, having several experiences, help me to gain more experience in international team and make my cooperation easier. I will improve my network and also my mind will be much more global.

I feel I Changed myself: in the sense that I learned how to play in a team in order to reach the goal. Maybe I used to work and think in a way, but if someone else, due to his culture and experience, has another, doesn't mean it is wrong, it is just different...it is important to be open minded to see different perspective of the same problem. I changed in this. I understood to be less shy, more self-confident and I started to be more friendly, I can give my idea.

To me, it doesn't matter with who I am working with, if they're Italian or from another country, because to me it is a matter of personality. I prefer to work with reliable people and very keen on working.

*How was your relationship with the several cultures?*

For me it was very easy to work with Germans, but I also manage to work with Danish, italians, Mongolian, thaliand, candian.

Mongolian experience, instead, was difficult to connect with their habit and culture, even though people was great there, they were welcoming, curious to meet someone who was European. They were late and sometimes I had to wait a lot, they weren't organized a lot, I was receiving my daily tasks the morning very late and I couldn't prepare better myself. In Mongolia was easy to meet people, but it was difficult to follow their mindset and super disorganized. They had so many meetings but at the end they couldn't solve anything because they still were disorganized and seemed that those meetings didn't help to come up with any solution. Their problem with the timing is also understandable because they used to be nomads and only some decades ago they started to use the clock, so is something that they still need to adapt to.

## STUDENT 5

Nationality: Argentina

*What do you think about having prejudices? Do you have any?*

I was scared to work with Germans because I knew they work a lot putting so much efforts, while Spanish people I thought they were very disorganized. At the end, I started to work very well with Germans, even though they were hard-worker, but we became also good friends. I didn't feel a good experience with Spanish because they weren't helpful at all since, they didn't do anything. I have been working with Chinese and I had a bit prejudice also regard them, I thought it would be so difficult to communicate with such a culture which is so far away from mine.

*With which cultures have you been working with?*

Germans, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Australia, Taiwan.

*Was it for you easy or hard to adapt to all the cultures?*

I am used to work in a friendly environment, where people are not only colleagues but also people to hang out with, so I used to take some pause and relax with people, drinking a tea or playing some games and then start working again, or once we finished to work, we can hangout. But while I was working in Strasbourg with French people and German, they just wanted to work and nothing more, there wasn't a friendly environment. They were more work-oriented, they didn't leave space to get to know.

*Do you remember one thing that easy for you to adapt to?*

Being on time and work like a German people

*What do you think about the perception of time?*

Concept of time is different. We had one month to deliver a project, while Germans wanted to meet immediately to start working, French people were always postponing, until the last week, where they were in a hurry and very stressed to finish their part. Another fact that is relevant to mention is the perception about grades: in Italy is too important to have a good average and a good grade, for other culture is not such important,

they are more focused on finishing their degree and this has an impact in projects because you can work for different purposes. I used to work in Italy as a waitress and in the university, so I didn't have all my day to work for projects, but Italians sometime wanted to spend all day for the project.

*Do you think you can gain more advantages or face more disadvantages in a MC environment?*

More benefits because you build yourself because you are shaping yourself taking the positive points of other culture. I learned a lot about organization, time management because I worked a lot with Germans. You can get also knowledge because there are people who have studied in different fields and they can share their knowledge and you absorb it. I improved my public speaking, learning new languages.

*What were the disadvantages that you had to deal with?*

Language barrier, you can lose some clue of the topic when you don't know the language. Working with Asian people was very difficult. They tend to have a passive position. They are very quiet, not proactive and you have to delegate to them the work. They have a different conception of power, if there is a leader, they would wait for the leader to decide and delegate the work and they will respect it and do it.

*What are your personal considerations regarding the topic discussed in the interview?*

In Argentina I used to be the leader always, now I felt that there were more leaders in the same group, so I started not to stand out every time, but also to let others to lead if they were more suitable for that project. I started to listen to others, not only to give work but also to let others to do that. Moreover, I really like to travel and organize trip, so being so organized made me also very organized at work or while I am carrying projects. This help me to manage better the time and the finance.

## STUDENT 6

Nationality: Argentina

*With which countries did you cooperate?*

I mostly had to deal with Chinese, Germans and Italians, but also French, Spanish, Colombians, Mexico, Indians, Netherlands, Belgium

*What do you think about having prejudices? Do you have any?*

When it comes to work, I sometimes don't trust people according to their culture. When you don't know the person yet, but you know his or her nationality, then you can start thinking which kind of person she or he might be.

Indian has a completely different conception of working than me and I was very worried. We have different conception of what is urgent, and I didn't have a good impression of them. But on the other hand, it doesn't mean all Indians are like that because it is a huge country, but at least if it happens to me again, I know how to behave. Moreover, I had a problem also with the language since it was very difficult to understand each other even though we were speaking in English. French have another way of working, because they wait till the end, for this I feel more comfortable to work with Germans, who generally speaking tend to finish the job asap.

*Is it difficult or easy for you to adapt in new context or environment or culture?*

Since I have been working in international environment for many years, I started to adapt myself easily to different context.

In my opinion cultures complement each other because a lot of people give you so many ideas, contents and all together create a great synergy to be proactive professionally and personally.

*When was it easy for you to adapt with another culture?*

Communication was clear and wasn't a problem to me with countries who speaks very well Spanish, Italian and English since I know these languages very well. The same cannot be said for Chinese or Asian people in general because it was hard to understand what they want, how do you they work, what do they think.

In Latin .America beside the laziness, which is something I can deal, I didn't have any problem. While with Asian people I had problems because I couldn't understand them, neither figure out what they were thinking. Europe is something in between L.A and Asia.

*Do you think that living in a MC environment brings some benefits to people?*

Creation of synergies and capacity to add ideas not known to everybody due to other people. You can develop self-awareness because you know how your personality and culture might affect others and vice versa.

*What factors may affect cultures and make them different?*

Religion and habits can affect the perception of time and organization. For instance, countries that has dinner at 6 versus countries who has dinner at 8 or at 10. This might affect the organization, time management and availability. Also the body language can affect the mood of collaboration: for example, Argentinian are super warm people, they hug and kiss even with people they have never met before. This can not be applied to people from Germany, asia and so on.

*Who brings more benefits? Working with people from your nationality or people from different nationality?*

Working with people from your country may affect the creativity because you do things in just one way common to everyone, while with people from other countries it is more open-minded. If you have to deliver something in urgent, better with people at the same culture, if you have more time, than definitely international.

I feel change after all my international experience, I became more respectful towards different culture, I started to deal and act like German. I don't feel so much Argentinian anymore, I feel a mix of so many culture.

I didn't care about health before, now I started to be much healthier, I became a little bit more sporty and I understood that this affect also my life and way to see life.



*With which countries was easy to work with and with which countries was difficult to work with?*

Easy to work with german; difficult to work with French. But age is affecting a lot because people were 5 years younger.

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